



**A Conference Exploring Research and Human Experiences of Carcerality in the MENA Region and Eastern Europe
12-14 October 2022
Giessen, Germany**

The Conference "Prisons Beyond Punishment: Exploring Political Technologies of Confinement" was held in Giessen, Germany from 12-14 October, 2022. The conference started on the evening of October 12 with a screening of "TADMOR," a film by Monika Borgmann and Lokman Slim. The film includes interviews with and re-enactments of the experiences of Lebanese individuals who were held in Syrian prisons. In the Q&A session after the screening of the film, one of the protagonists Ali Abou Dehen shared additional experiences and details of his time in prison and the process of making the film.

On the first day of the conference Professor Andreas Langenohl and Dr. Mina Ibrahim offered opening remarks. Professor Langenohl is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Giessen and is affiliated with its collaborative research center "Dynamics of Security." He spoke about his previous work in memories under Stalinism in the 1990s for his PhD and subsequent research, and reflected on the transformation of the memoryscape in Russia from the late 1990s to the present day, as we are currently seeing the strong return to and imposition of a specific memory narrative in Russia towards its recent invasion of Ukraine. In thinking about "macro-crimes" like Stalinism, it is not just a memory of a time in itself, but a time that exists still in the present and whose dynamics are still felt. The "Dynamics of Security" center is a research center that investigates and promotes an understanding of security and safety, including awareness of the detrimental effect of "security," as the designation of vulnerable groups as risks and a need to be securitized in turn can render them more vulnerable. Prisons are implicated in these dynamics, as they are central to building security regimes and housing alleged or real threats to the public order, yet the incarceration of vulnerable groups only increased their vulnerability.

Ibrahim then spoke about his engagement with the themes and topics of the conference though the beginning of his work with prisons started with the uprisings across the Middle East in 2011 that brought with them an increased speaking and awareness of prison experiences in Arab countries. In 2018 he then began working with Monika Borgmann and Lokman Slim, co-founders and co-directors of UMAM Documentation and Research (UMAM D&R), a research and archival organization. Together the three oversaw the initiation and management of the MENA Prison Forum (MPF) center until the assassination of Slim in southern Lebanon on February 3, 2021. The focus of the MPF is to bring together the multitude of perspectives on prisons and carcerality in the Middle East, outside of the traditional exclusive framework of human rights and activism, and instead across the Forum's three "As": art, academia, and activism. These three spheres respectively engage with carceral dynamics in the Middle East with very little communication between the three, while the MPF aims to bring these three together and increase forms of collaboration and sharing as a space to reflect and learn. This was additionally the motivation and spirit behind this conference, as each panel allowed for discussion among the participants and fostered active collaboration and exchange between the participants from different backgrounds.

The first panel was entitled **“Sites of Incarceration: Operating, Abandoned, and Demolished”** and consisted of two presentations: “Syrian Gulag: Assad’s Prisons, 1970-2020” by Jaber Baker (Transregional Forum, Berlin) and Ugur Ümit Üngör (Amsterdam University) and “Instrumental Reason as a Colonial Technology: The Example of Kurdistan” by Sharo Garip (University of Cologne). Baker and Üngör presented on the experiences and findings of their recently published book of the same title as their presentation (currently available in Dutch, forthcoming in Arabic and English) “Syrian Gulag: Assad’s Prisons, 1970-2020.” They addressed the difficulties of working on prisons and their archives in the MENA region in trying to uncover the network of prisons in Syria, as they aimed to develop an inventory of these prisons as a first step to analyzing the dynamics and effects of these prisons and their overall system in Syria. They shared some of their findings into the inner workings of the carceral system and the many security departments in Syria, including the elements of collaboration, fighting, and overlapping mandates. Jaber and Üngör addressed the various sources they used for their research, one type of which was in-depth interviews with ex-detainees, through which they explored the backgrounds of the ex-detainees and their experiences in the prisons. They spoke about the delicate nature of understanding the reliability of prisoner perceptions and recollections of the prisons, and their process of evaluating different accounts together and in light of dynamics that could be expected within the prisons.

Garip in his presentation “Instrumental Reason as a Colonial Technology: The Example of Kurdistan” addressed how the education system in Turkey posed a type of prison for Kurdish students in the form of banning Kurdish languages and imposing Turkish upon them. He explored the application of colonial analysis on the Kurdish case, including through the colonization of culture, international colonization, internal and self-colonization, and the colonization of violence. He noted how the colonization of the mind was the main objective in this case, to deny the access of identity and to impose concepts of civilization and norms upon the community. Garip’s presentation evoked a discussion of how current carceral conditions in MENA can or should be read in light of colonial dynamics and the merits of including post-colonial regimes for their addition of new layers to methods and means of torture and repression.

The discussion session then involved questions and explorations of the connection between the two cases of analysis, and the colonial periods and the national independence movements of the countries. The conversation then addressed the need to focus on regional colonialism and powers, the ways in which neighboring countries in the Middle East exerted power on one another. Another topic of discussion was around the top-down, mandated use of violence in Syria as well as the space for discretionary violence, and the choice of operators to fluctuate between these levels of violence. A related issue was that of the sources of power of the Syrian intelligence as being purely derived from their relationship with the al-Assad family or from other sources. While the al-Assad family is a huge source of power for these individuals, they also derive their power from the status of the location of operation, as the areas of power in the major cities such as Homs and Aleppo provide more power than areas such as Daraa and Suweida. A third topic of conversation revolved around the nature of the archival documentation of the prison system in Syria. In addition to the problems of accessing the archives of state intelligence systems, there is the problem of the sensitivity of the information in the documents: while the intent behind reading these documents would be to understand better the dynamics within the intelligence and carceral systems, these very systems collected private and intimate details about regular individuals and their lives, rendering the reading and publication of these documents ethically sensitive. Therefore, while access to these archives would be vital for verifying and having documentation of issues the researchers were otherwise unable to verify, such as the use of chemical experiments in Tadmor prison in the 1980s, the private information would be handled according to sensitive and ethical considerations. Another dynamic of reading archival documents is the possibility to find a lack of violence, or lack of language around violence, as the orders can be

conveyed in other ways (eg. verbally), or the written documents and orders were destroyed or not archived. Therefore, the seeking of the truth through a singular reliance on archives could be misguided.

The second panel was entitled “**The Social Techniques of Violence**” and included presentations by Noura Chalati (ZMO- Berlin), “Decomposing the Self: Physical and Psychological Violence in and between Syria and the GDR” and Rahma Fateen (Oslo University), “‘Ahālī al-Mu'taqalīn': A Socio-Political Study of Families of post-2013-coup Political Prisoners in Egypt”.

Chalati explored her research on Stasi archives and these source depictions of the Syrian intelligence services. Her work vitally grapples with the issue of silences present in archives around violence, as through her research she encountered silence in the archives of the East German intelligence agency around the violence and detention tactics used, posing a serious question of how to read these sources for evidence and indications of the violence leveraged by the agency. This silence is further implicated in the narratives of the archives on the relations between the Stasi and the Syrian intelligence fields during the Cold War, from the mid-1960s to the 1990s. A central element to her research is understanding how these two intelligence fields learned from one another in light of a common popular conception that the two bodies shared information and tactics throughout these years. However, the nature of the collaboration, in addition to the violence, was a silence in the archives, as she was unable to find evidence of the popularly-understood collaboration between the two countries in this way. She hypothesizes therefore that this silence can be explained by either the lack of actual such relations or the records of these relations being lost or kept in other documents.

Fateen’s presentation addressed her socio-political study of families of political prisoners in Egypt after the 2013 coup. She explored how research on political prisoners in Egypt is complicated by the fact that there is no legal designation of political prisoners versus criminal prisoners, and that the very status of “political” prisoners is denied as existing as a category in Egypt. Despite this, political prisoners do exist in Egypt, and they are treated differently within the carceral systems, as are their families outside of prison, through various tools of surveillance and pressure. Fateen explored specific impacts of the carceral system in Egypt on the families of political prisoners, notably through the large amounts of individuals affected by family members’ imprisonment. She is exploring theories surrounding family dynamics of prisoners through a study of family visits and the impact of this quasi-imprisonment of family members trying to visit their relatives. Another layer of dynamics she is exploring is that of the gender impact of political imprisonment on female political prisoners as well as the female family members of political prisoners in Egypt.

The discussion session after the panel brought up the transformation of the background of political prisoners in Egypt and the recent flux of Muslim Brotherhood members as political prisoners in Egypt post-2013. The issue of ethical engagement with families of political prisoners was addressed, due to the sensitivity of these conversations and the repressive nature of the current Egyptian regime. Another element of discussion around Egyptian political prisoners was that of the economic dynamics around political imprisonment in Egypt, involving the costs of visits, the loss of the family breadwinner, and the cost of accessing information about detainees. The impact of the overall prison dynamic on family ties was also raised as a topic for further analysis.

The third panel was entitled “**Agency and its Limits,**” and saw presentations by Amr Afifi (Freedom Initiative & Syracuse University), entitled “A Prisoner of What, A Prisoner to Whom? Towards a Political Psychology of Imprisonment in Egypt;” Walaa Quisay (The University of

Edinburgh) on “Carceral Fiqh and the Battle of the Empty Stomachs: Debates on the Permissibility of Hunger Strikes;” and Mona Oraby (Howard University), “The Confinements We Ascent to: Classifying the Body in Civil and Criminal Justice Administration.” Afifi’s presentation was divided into analyzing his work with the Freedom Initiative, an organization advocating for justice and the rights of political prisoners in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and his ongoing research on the political psychology of trauma. The organization undertakes casework and research, as well as advocacy, communication, and campaigns around specific prisoners and cases. On a macro level, the organization also analyzes trends and dynamics around arbitrary and political detention, and aims to provide a human lens to the experience of detention in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Regarding Afif’s ongoing research, he is looking at how converging dynamics in Egypt are creating an environment of trauma, between the economic situation in the country and the transnational repression of academics and others entering or being extradited to Egypt. He is analyzing prison letters as sources of data to track and map trends of incarceration using the works of prisoners themselves to understand the political lives of detainees. He aims to understand the impact of imprisonment on political detainees: for some, the experience of being imprisoned strengthens their mobilization, passion, and strength, while for others it has an opposite effect. The impact of collaboration within a political movement or general mobilization was discussed, as was the role of competitive narratives of victimization, with it the ways in which the prison experience can impact the multitude of identities that individuals have.

Quisay’s presentation focused on how religion is centered in prison resistance, and specifically in hunger strikes. Quisay’s research addresses dynamics and tensions between Islam and the permissibility of hunger strikes in prison, ranging from the centrality of fasting as a part of the religion and the centrality of fasting in forms of prison resistance. However, the use of the body in this way within carceral systems and as a tool against oppression is seen differently by religious leaders, scholars, and prisoners themselves. Her research also touched upon the overall role of religion in carceral sites and the support provided to prisoners from praying together and having rituals within the confines of prisons. In looking at the role of religion within prison, some of the literature that was raised was around the rules of allowing prisoners of war to pray. In the interviews she has been conducting, the prisoners she spoke with focused more on the practicality of the hunger strikes as forms of resistance and less on the religious element of it. Conversely, however, her interlocutors shared that the debate over hunger strikes in Islam was more used by the prison guards and even the prison imam as justifications against undertaking the strikes. The system of repression against this type of resistance included the guards, the imams, and eventually doctors who advocated against the hunger strikes and ultimately could threaten forced feeding. In certain contexts, Quisay even noted that the prison imams were having conversations with prisoners about religion to monitor and understand the levels of extremism among the population and of certain prisoners. Quisay further found that some of the conversations around the permissibility and responsibility for the hunger strikes placed it not on the prisoners undertaking these strikes, but instead on the system allowing for the strikes and starvation to be happening.

Oraby then spoke about her research looking at non-Muslim communities in Egypt, Baha’i and Coptic Orthodox Christians specifically, and their struggle to be recognized by the state. In Egypt, religion is included in all documents besides the passport, all Egyptians are assigned a religion from birth, which is passed patri-lineally. Depending on the religion and its status in the country, this impacts the rights of the individual, spanning marriage, divorce, and inheritance, rendering the role of religion large in the relationship between the citizen and the state. Furthermore, it is complicated and lengthy administratively to change an individual’s designated religion. Oraby explores how and why in light of and even in spite of these dynamics, there are cases of individuals who are part of minority groups who work to counter their designated religious status

but in counter-intuitive ways, including in ways that entrench their subjugation in Egypt. She focused specifically on individuals who challenged the government to recognize their changed status of religion, notably those for whom doing so would actually subject them to a perceived lower class or grouping in the country. She found that despite the huge financial and social costs, these members of minority groups still appealed to be recognized in the ways they wanted to be by the government, they were strongly attached to the government recognizing them for the religion to which they saw themselves as belonging.

The discussion session after the three panels focused on the intersection between law and religion, specifically in Egypt around conversion. The other area of overlap between religious communities and the Egyptian state is simply one of control: both aim to control and delineate acceptable and unacceptable behavior in society. The conversations also included how to theorize identity and trauma in political science, as a way of best conceptualizing complex phenomena on the ground into academic terms and frameworks. A possible area for interesting connection and collaboration that was raised was looking at the use of hunger strikes and self-immolation in the case of the Kurdish group PKK as interesting data for the case of hunger strikes and bodily harm in confinement.

The last day of the conference opened with the fourth panel entitled **“Picturing Prisons”** in which Tereza Soušková and Alexandra Skorvid (The Virtual Museum of the Gulag) presented the “Gulag Online Project: Gulag Camps as an Object of Archaeological Research;” Adham Youssef (FU Berlin) who presented on “Compliance and Prisons in Egyptian Cinema;” and Ali Arkady (VII Agency) who presented on “Between Two Memories: Ukraine and Iraq.”

Soušková and Skorvid outlined their work with the organized Gulag.cz and its focus on Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus as a cross-geographical focus on Eastern Europe. They provided a brief history of the organization and its ties to Memorial International, the organization that recently won the Nobel Peace Prize but was liquidated last year by a Russian court. The work of Gulag.cz is on the Soviet gulag prison system and its totalitarian system in general, and its objective is to share information on this system and the past in the Czech Republic and globally. Their work takes the form of working with victims who were in the gulags with a unique central use of modern technologies to map, capture, and visualize abandoned gulag camps. The organization has used geospatial images and excursion trips to track down abandoned camps in Siberia, and they have used the materials they have collected to develop an online gulag museum through which they show 3D images and reconstructions of the sites. As the location of these camps is extremely inaccessible, the mission of their work is to bring the visuals and reality of this system to the broader public.

Youssef then presented his research on representations of prison in Egyptian films, for which he remarked on the usefulness of the MENA Prison Forum website section dedicated to films on prisons in the MENA region. His research found that while many of the films are not set in or specifically focus on prisons, prisons are often evoked as part of the storyline, specifically the idea of being arrested. He developed a framework for analyzing the types of films that address prisons: one being ones that represent prisons as a location for the protagonist to be challenged and where he or she experiences suffering, another category being films where prisons are a place for comedic events to take place and to have a funny dynamics explored, and the third category being films that show prisons as spaces to shed light on the brutality of current or usually former political regimes. He then selected and screened short clips of films as examples. A second categorization Youssef developed was to look at prisons as sites of compliance, meaning how the prisoner is coerced into the demands and agenda of the prison system. Types of compliance

he developed are compliance by torture, compliance by recruitment and nationalism, compliance by promising amnesty, and compliance by abusing prisoner family or friends. Overall, his reading of films depicting prisoners allow for analysis of how Egyptians see law enforcement authorities, as well as how the authorities see themselves or allow themselves to be seen through film, the latter of which is largely dictated by the use of censorship and approval procedures for films to be released in Egypt.

Arkady presented his recent work addressing his memories and experience in Iraq and the recent invasion of Ukraine and subsequent refugee flows into Europe and France. Throughout his presentation, he spoke about his experiences growing up in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, including specific memories such as visiting the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. He spoke about his various periods of life and how carceral dynamics have followed him, from growing up as a Kurd in Baathist Iraq to now living as a refugee in France and bound by immigration and visa restrictions. He reflected on how the images of Ukrainian refugees fleeing and entering Europe triggered memories of refugees fleeing Iraq throughout the years. The connection and juxtaposition between these two memories and experiences formed his recent art project in which he mixes journalism, photography, documentary film, lithography, and art to display images and memories across light and solid materials.

The panel discussion addressed a large area of interest among the participants on drawing connections between dynamics in the MENA region and in Europe, specifically eastern Europe, both historically and in the present day. The presentations on the Stasi records and connection with Syria, Soviet gulags, and Arkady's work provided a stimulus for conversations and possible further projects. Topics explored were the similarities between the two areas in the form of intelligence surveillance, camp and detention experiences under Soviet and Nazi rule and in Middle Eastern countries, and refugee flows from both regions. The topic of how to address and show these dynamics to children was revisited, around the display of the Soviet gulags and Arkady's work, and suggestions included working with counselors and psychiatrists on how to engage students and children with these subject matters without causing harm. Another element of conversation was the variety of sources and communication styles that are able to be analyzed and used, across the mix of old and modern technologies in the panel, this combination of older forms of technology that Arkady uses with the lithograph, Youssef's focus on cinema, and the use of advanced and recent technology such as virtual reality.

The fifth panel, entitled "**Prison Literature, Music, Heritage,**" included presentations by Eylaf Badr Eddin (Transregional Forum, Berlin), on "Musical Remains and Songs in Syrian Prisons and Exile;" and Stephan Milich (Cologne University) on "What Future for the Prisons of Syria?" Syrian perspectives on the Question of Negative Heritage."

Badr Eddin in his research is exploring the question of "happy" moments in prison with a specific focus on the role of music in prison. He is exploring musical remains from prisons in Syria, which he terms as such because the conception of prison songs in Syria is much less developed or even a concept, ex-prisoners themselves are aware of. He noted the novelty of his work in this way, that he is the first researcher undertaking this work on prison songs in Syria specifically. His prisons of focus in his case study are among some of the most brutal and deadly in Syria: the first is Branch 215 in Kafr Sousa, Damascus, which was the branch from which many of the "Caesar photos" depicting abuse, torture, starvation, and systemic killing came: the Branch indeed even called the "Death Branch" for its high rate of killings of prisoners. His second case study is that of Sednaya, a long-running prison in which an estimated 30,000 individuals have been killed and from where reports of "salt rooms" have emerged, which are rooms full of salt to preserve the high

number of the dead before their ultimate disposal from the prison. The “salt rooms” are also being used as methods of torture, as prisoners have been made to maintain and or have been detained in these rooms among the bodies of their deceased co-prisoners.

Badr Eddin noted existing literature and research on prison songs and music from other cases, as there is research or awareness of music and songs in Holocaust camps, while in the Middle East, music in prisons in Tunisia and Egypt are the most known. Conversely, as noted at the start of his presentation, in his research on Syria he was finding a notable absence of music in prisons. Despite this, he described evidence he had found of love songs being sung in prison, often used as symbolic representation of emotions the prisoners were otherwise unable to express, such as homesickness, longing for a familiar life from before their time in prison, and pining for someone (or something, such as a country) who does not love them back. He also noted a dynamic of prisoners singing popular songs that they changed the words to, rendering them semi-familiar songs, which he termed “sijniyya,” a combination of the words for prison and songs in Arabic. He also uncovered over 15 new songs that were developed in prison. He also noted a transregional movement of songs, in which prisoners in Syria sang songs from other Arab countries. These findings have led him to question exactly how to define prison songs themselves, and to focus on the importance of genre classification. The question of how to analyze something that is not named, and the challenges in his research of trying to analyze something that is not recognized or known as a specific phenomenon among his interviewees. He spoke about a particularly telling interview, in which when speaking with an ex-prisoner they admonished him for asking about prison songs, only to reveal later in the conversation that they had written six prison songs, but was not aware that these could be considered exactly the focus of Badr Eylaf’s work.

In the second presentation, Milich explored his continual work on the entangled histories of Palmyra, Syria of a significant ancient city, its location of the infamous Tadmor prison, and the violence between Daesh and the Syrian regime in recent years. He looks at Palmyra as a site of “negative heritage” as an overlap between the studies of heritage and repression. He noted other types of negative heritage sites such as Auschwitz and Robbins Island, but he is currently grappling with how the notion of negative heritage relates to the Syrian case and context. He spoke with several Syrian heritage and cultural experts, and shared elements of these conversations with them. These discussions centered around the translation of the term negative heritage into Arabic into a usable and appropriate term, as well as how to preserve elements of cultural heritage without only promoting positive or false narratives that erase darker periods of history. The conversations around cultural and heritage preservation also inherently engage with the fields of historic preservation and archeology, fields that have had historically negative and predatory elements within them as well. Questions of the audience for negative heritage were addressed as well, such as how to present elements of negative heritage to young audiences, as well as the timeframe for preservation and narrating of the events.

The discussion engaged with the topic of the preservation of negative heritage, specifically when the implications of such a period are still being heavily felt. Similarly, the question of how to involve the impacted individuals for their engagement and determination of how such things are preserved and memorialized was discussed. The issue of the normative element of “negative” heritage was also addressed, as depending on positionality this issue can become contested. There was a conversation around the term “negative” and if another term could be better used to open the conversations and engage with the nature of the history being more “self-critical” instead of vilifying. The question of where to start was also brought up, meaning at what point do you start covering the history of a place or of a movement without neglecting or including too much. The discussions around Badr Eylaf’s work also addressed his positionality in being able to conduct

the interviews he had been undertaking, and his ability to react and probe further in the interviews due to his positionality.

The last panel of the conference was entitled “**Prisons Inside-Out**” and allowed for Saif al-Islam Eid (Doha Graduate Institute) to present on “Carceral Sites of Resistance: Education in Egyptian Prisons;” Christoph Schwarz (University of Innsbruck) to present on “ Transnational Repression and Diaspora Politics: The Moroccan Monarchy and the Hirak Supporters in Europe;” and Henrik Andersen (Roskilde University) to present on “Sublime State, Profane Rule: Prison, Punishment, and Sovereignty in Iraq.”

Al-Islam Eid’s presentation focused on the at least 60,000 political prisoners in Egypt that compose a mirror of Egyptian society in prison. Of this prison population, his research focuses specifically on students as political prisoners, and the rise in student detention in Egypt after 2013. He noted the influx of students being detained as a result of a rise in student activism in universities against the military coup in Egypt, and he is specifically looking at the right to education within Egyptian prisons. He is analyzing the ways in which political prisoners can seek their right to education and knowledge within the prison. He addressed elements of international legal conventions that try to ensure the right to education and those that rule the treatment in prison, as well as the national laws in Egypt. He addressed documents such as the Nelson Mandela Rules that outline the right to education and the provision of books in prisons, as well as the fact that the Egyptian constitution that enshrines the ability of all citizens to have access to education. However, he noted a clear contradiction between the legislation and practices, and a specific finding of his research was the cooperation and collaboration between the prisons, security institutions, universities, and the judiciary in denying the right to education to students who are detained. However, Al-Islam Eid noted that among the prisoners, there is a system of compassionate support and solidarity for students. As he mentioned at the outset of his presentation, the prison community in Egypt has representation from almost all elements of Egyptian society. This provides a network of experts across a range of topics from whom students can ask for guidance and insights.

Schwarz then presented his work on Moroccan diaspora politics in Europe. He noted at the outset that prisons are not at the center of his research, but he is looking more at what notions of politics and political diaspora members develop going between Morocco and Europe. He began outlining the situation in the Rif region in Morocco as one of the country’s most marginalized regions, and as a result, with one of the highest rates of migration to the EU from Morocco. In this region the Hirak movement started in 2016 when a fishmonger was killed by police forces who had confiscated his catch. The movement mobilized in protest which resulted in mass arrests, and the Hirak movement formed outside of established political parties and has striven to avoid being co-opted by the Moroccan monarchy ever since. The demands of the movement focus on socio-economic improvements in the region and a change in the ways in which diaspora funds transferred back to Morocco are redistributed to focus on the Rif region due to their high percentage of diaspora members in Europe. Morocco also heavily monitors its migration flows and tracks the remittance and transfers back to the country from the diaspora. The tracking of the diaspora includes also tracking individuals and maintaining information on them.

Schwartz focused on the interconnection between Moroccan and European monitoring of Moroccan nationals in Europe, including members of the Moroccan diaspora engaging in strikes and protests in France and facing questioning when they returned to Morocco. This “transnational repression” as coined by Diana Moss can be further seen around the Hirak supporters in Europe. The Hirak movement is large in Europe, with committees forming across countries and becoming

politically active. Among these communities involved in the Hirak movement questions and concerns have come up in their treatment when they return back to Morocco to visit, with activists being arrested or detained at the airport in Morocco or once they were in Morocco itself. This is complicated by policies of European countries, such as Belgium, that will not intervene in a situation when a Belgian citizen is detained in a country where that person is also a dual national. As it is impossible to give up Moroccan citizenship, this triggers an almost imprisonment of Moroccan nationals who want to distance themselves from the Moroccan authorities and repression but cannot. While many of the Hirak supporters Schwartz spoke with were open to discussing various dynamics, they were reluctant to speak about their treatments at the border. He concluded by connecting the cases he had found to clear indications of transnational proxy punishment, threats, and surveillance of Moroccan diasporas and his findings around Moroccan citizenship as a means of repression for members of the diaspora.

Andersen's presentation focused on conversations he has had with ex-prisoners in Iraq that challenge how states in the MENA are often spoken about as being weak or failing, while instead in these conversations he sees the state as holding a lot of power. While his overall PhD project looks at prison memories, this presentation was on a section of his research that looks at spectral elements evoked in his conversations. He contrasted this spectral with the public spectacle of violence in these cases. His presentation explored how to engage with intangible data, evocations of ghostly elements, and haunted dynamics. He dove into the case of one of his subjects, an individual who was forcibly disappeared and then released from prison who he has known for years, and he explores quotes and comments from the individual about how his experiences continually exist around him in nonverbal ways. Andersen's issue is that oftentimes this material gets discarded because it is not easily seen in texts or conversations, yet this material needs to be taken more seriously, and there needs to be a way to textually and academically render this for analysis.

The discussion session at the end of the panel brought up potentially helpful areas for further research for Anderson, such as Salwa Ismail's work on horror in Syria, as well as the reading of novels and fiction for traces of ghostly hauntings as represented in Iraqi fiction. Another suggestion was to look at literature or evidence from dreams in order to better capture these ghostly or not-fully-conscious elements he is trying to address. There was also interest in collaboration between Arkady and Anderson on what they had experienced and heard while in Iraq around these elements of haunting post-prison. The discussion also addressed the legal support that could be mobilized for the Hirak members abroad, but at the current moment there hadn't been any structures that could protect them. Lastly, there were questions about the role of the family in supporting prisoners in their quest for education, as the struggle to access education and knowledge among prisoners could expand to support systems outside of the prison.

In the closing session of the conference, participants stressed the remarkable and unique nature of the conference. One participant noted he had attended over forty conferences and this one was the one that facilitated the most collaboration, interaction, and willingness to share ideas and suggestions. He additionally noted the trend of stigmatizing prisons through the enthusiasm and dedication of young researchers committing themselves to work on such difficult topics. Another element noted was the gender distribution among the participants, with a significant presence of female researchers addressing issues of carcerality and violence.

There was also an immense appreciation for the work of the MENA Prison Forum and UMAM D&R, and the support and legacy established by the co-founders and co-directors Monika Borgmann and the late Lokman Slim. It was noted that it was thanks to the careful planning and

selection of presenters by MENA Prison Forum Coordinator Dr. Ibrahim and Professor Langenohl that brought together the incredible participants and their insightful presentations. Professor Langenohl noted that unlike other academic conferences, this was really a conference that addressed both research on and the human experience of prisons. Dr. Ibrahim closed with stressing the importance of the conference to bring together perspectives and experiences from both the MENA region and Eastern Europe on prisons, both in light of shared prison and carceral histories and with the recent new dynamics and even tensions in Europe over the refugee flows from the respective regions.