

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW) and Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (IMES) of the University of Edinburgh invite proposals for a Symposium:

### ***Contextualising Community - Diasporas of the Modern Middle East***

27-28 October 2011  
University of Edinburgh

The Middle East (defined broadly) has historically been a heterogeneous site where distinct communities, differentiated by origin and orientation, have coexisted through many periods of conflict and even longer times of peace. At certain points, some communities rose to positions of prominence and power, while others' very existence was threatened. From the late nineteenth century, dynamic political changes have meant that many of these groups struggle to claim and negotiate a space for themselves, based on political and social pragmatism.

Although there has been substantial interest in Middle Eastern immigrant communities in the west, diasporic and minority communities in the Middle East have been relatively neglected in recent academic scholarship. Through both theoretical engagement and in depth case studies, this symposium will look at how these groups are organised and sustained, balancing (actual or imagined) 'homelands' and the reality of lives lived in 'host states', while challenging the terms and validity of this framework.

The symposium will map the entanglement of these communities in the wider Middle Eastern societies of which they are a part. We will investigate how this varies according to the political climate and discourse of the moment. We will also reflect more widely on how communities are built and maintained in a diasporic space, examining issues of identity, citizenship and belonging in the modern Middle East.

We are interested in receiving papers combining both theoretical discussion of diaspora with a specific empirical case or regional study. Papers discussing particular aspects of diasporic cultural, political, and social life in the Middle East are also welcome. The symposium seeks to challenge the boundaries of what are commonly conceived of as diasporas, and is open to explorations of diasporic identity based on, for example, urban identity (e.g. Levantine, Alexandrian), feminist perspectives or class-based allegiances.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- how state policy affects diasporic groups
- the dynamics of intercommunal coexistence

- reconceptualising 'community'
- intra-community struggles for power and representation
- diasporic media
- diasporic institutions and leaders
- the fluidity and hybridity of diasporic identities
- the significance of sites and spaces in defining diasporic identity
- local narratives of conflict and their legacy
- transnational consciousness and visions of 'home'

Following the symposium participants will be invited to submit their revised paper for inclusion in an edited volume.

With the help of funding from the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (a consortium of Durham, Edinburgh and Manchester Universities) we will be able to cover accommodation costs for all participants. We will also endeavour to cover or contribute to travel expenses for those coming from the Middle East.

Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words and a one page CV to: Dr Sossie Kasbarian, [sossie.kasbarian@ed.ac.uk](mailto:sossie.kasbarian@ed.ac.uk) and Dr Anthony Gorman, [Anthony.Gorman@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Anthony.Gorman@ed.ac.uk) by 18 July 2011.