

Call for Papers

Diasporas, Exiles, Migrants, and Refugees from Europe in the Middle East and North Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries

A workshop held on July 8-10, 2025, at the Centre Marc Bloch, Berlin, Germany.

The [Centre Marc Bloch](#) and the research program [Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe](#) (EUME) at the [Forum Transregionale Studien](#) invite scholars from the humanities and social sciences to apply for the workshop “Diasporas, Exiles, Migrants, and Refugees from Europe in the Middle East and North Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries” to be held on July 8-10, 2025, at the Centre Marc Bloch in Berlin.

The workshop is organized by **Alexandros Lamprou** (Research Fellow, Philipps-Universität Marburg), **Esther Möller** (Centre March Bloch), **Rim Naguib** (EUME Fellow of the Gerda Henkel Foundation 2024/25), and **Georges Khalil** (Forum Transregionale Studien / EUME), and is financially supported by funding Alexandros Lamprou receives from the Gerda Henkel Foundation (Special Programme Forced Migration, Grant No. AZ 09/FM/22), and the Centre Marc Bloch.

The Middle East and North Africa are connected to Europe and other world regions by infrastructures, politics and the mobility of goods, ideas, images, and people. The selective historiography of these connections however is marked by boundaries and uneven power relations and capacities. In recent years, mobility from the South or the East of the Mediterranean northward has been increasingly framed as a concern or problem in European host societies. While there seems to be a consensus among scholars that mobility, migration, and exchange are common and constitutive features of human history everywhere, attention has rarely been paid to the long history of inverse movements of people from Europe southward and eastward, to North Africa and the Middle East.

Our workshop aims to look at the MENA region as a destination and space for Diasporas, Exiles, Migrants, and Refugees from Europe. This approach may contribute to a more nuanced assessment of the movements of people, and how they have reciprocally affected and shaped societies, economies, cultures, and thought, not only in the Middle East and North Africa but also in Europe. In contrast to the hegemonic political and media discourses and much of the scholarly literature on migration, that have tended to uncritically think of population movements in unidirectional terms – from the ‘Global South’ to the ‘Global North’ – we wish to reflect on the mobility of people from Europe towards the South and East, in the context of European colonialism, economic crises, political upheavals and wars, and to propose a reflexive approach to the study of human mobility in search of safety, freedom, and a better life.

We invite contributions by scholars who study the Middle East and North Africa as spaces of (post)colonial arrival, refuge, exile, migration, settlement, or transit for people from (East, West, South

or North) Europe from the late 18th up until the end of the 20th centuries, a period that marked the beginnings and transformation of colonialism, the end of empires, the establishment of modern border-, passport-, citizen- and knowledge-regimes, of postcolonial rule – a period that witnessed major wars, crises, upheavals, and exponential growth. We would like to discuss movements of people, diasporic communities and relations, trajectories of exile and refuge, displacement, ethnic cleansing and settlement, experiences and regimes of arrival, protection, hospitality, or alienation. We are interested in the life and experiences of diasporas, migrants, exiles, and refugees from Europe in the Middle East. What was their place in the societies, economies or publics? What are the historical legacies of their presence, their lives, works, relations and ideas in post/colonial North Africa and the Middle East, and in Europe? How do their trajectories compare and relate to contemporary forms in the governance of diversity, mobility, and belonging, or could potentially modify the terms of the history of the respective issues or concepts? Such a broad perspective could relate for example the migration of Greek, Italian, Maltese, Jewish or Ukrainian workers or artisans to refugees from Russia, Poland, France, Germany, or the Caucasus, to the experience of diasporic communities from Europe that have been present in the Middle East and North Africa at least since the late 15th century, to broader discussions of the contexts and regimes of migration and mobility, nationality and foreignness. When and how, for example, did individuals or groups of people become diasporic, ex-patriate, foreign, native or minoritarian? How can we rethink the different categories at stake (nationals and foreigners, migrants or refugees, diasporas, settlers or natives) as well as the shifting boundaries between them?

The aim of this workshop is to bring together strands of research that have rarely been in conversation with each other due to scholarly and institutional arrangements that separate between specific areas of the world (such as the Middle East or North Africa) and systematic questions addressed from specific European or national locations as universal. Drawing on current approaches in global, transnational history and (post)colonial studies, we invite scholars to critically engage with (methodological) nationalism in the study of migration and displacement, exile or diaspora in historical and conceptual ways.

In connecting geographies and questions habitually thought of as separate, this workshop is intended as an invitation to think about how historical, spatial, cultural or conceptual imaginations of the nation and its fragments, regions and their boundaries, have been subverted or transformed by the movements of people from Europe who went to, lived in, or passed through North Africa and the Middle East. What potential might a decolonial approach to the questions of diaspora, exile, migration and refuge offer, and how does it challenge our understanding of areas or regions like West- or Eastern Europe, Near- and Middle East, or North Africa?

DISCIPLINES AND POSSIBLE TOPICS

We invite early career and established scholars to submit contributions from the disciplines or fields of History, Literary and Intellectual History, historical Sociology or Human Geography, Middle Eastern Studies or the study of Migration and Mobility. Possible contributions may treat, but are not limited to, the following topics roughly from the late 18th to the late 20th centuries:

- population movements and mobility from Europe to and through the MENA region;
- European diasporas, émigrés, exiles, workers, and refugees in the MENA region;
- the end of Empires and the displacement of people and communities;

- migration, exile, displacement, and refuge as consequences of crises and wars;
- colonial entanglements of population movement and displacement;
- expatriate communities and networks of mobility in the MENA and between MENA and Europe or other regions;
- diverse experiences of movement and displacement of refugees, host societies, colonial and national governments, and international organizations;
- regimes of arrival, settlement, and status;
- the question of race, religion, and language in addressing and understanding displacement, migration, exile, diaspora, refuge or arrival;
- the case of Palestine/Israel through the lens of diaspora, exile, migration, displacement or refuge;
- MENA as a transit space;
- population movements and border regimes, negotiations of legal and political statuses, and expressions of belonging;
- impacts of mobility on societies of arrival, and return.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The workshop organizers will evaluate the applications. We kindly ask you to submit your application with a **title and abstract of your contribution (up to one page) and a short academic CV (up to two pages) as one PDF file by March 12, 2025, 12.30h (noon) CET** to:

eume@trafo-berlin.de

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact one of the four organizers via e-mail:

lamprou@staff.uni-marburg.de / esther.moeller@cmb.hu-berlin.de / rime.naguib@gmail.com / georges.khalil@trafo-berlin.de

Applicants will be informed about the outcome by March 31, 2025.

The invited participants will be asked to send a summary of their contribution by June 30, 2025, and subsequently to write a contribution to a series on “Diasporas, Exiles, Migrants, and Refugees from Europe in the Middle East and North Africa” on the [TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research](#).

PRACTICALITIES

Limited funding is available to support travel and accommodation for participants who come from outside Berlin and are not able to use funding from their institutions. We can offer lump sums to contribute to the costs of travel and accommodation: between 500 and 800 EUR for participants who travel from the Middle East or North Africa, up to 500 EUR for participants who travel from the US or European Countries, and up to 300 EUR for participants from within Germany. We ask applicants to

indicate in their application what support they may need to partially or fully cover the costs of travel, and up to three days of accommodation in Berlin.