

XVI Convegno SeSaMO

Università degli Studi di Cagliari  
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SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

**TITOLO/TITLE:** The Academic Question of Palestine

**PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/s:** WALAA ALQAI SIYA, NICOLA PERUGINI, MATTEO CAPASSO

**ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):**

The roundtable aims to construct a conversation about the special themed issue- titled: *The Academic Question of Palestine*- which is currently in the process of being launched by the journal Middle East Critique. The roundtable will be joined respectively by MEC Editor (Dr Matteo Capasso), MEC Managing Editor (Dr Andrea Teti), the two co-editors of the SI (Drs Walaa Alqaisiya and Nicola Perugini) and Palestine studies expert Dr Miriam Abu Samra. The aim of the roundtable is to discuss the main themes of the Special Issue highlighting its overall value to academic contributions on the Middle East and the Palestine/Israel conflict. Engaging Palestine and its centrality to epistemic frameworks and intellectual debates cannot be more timely. Student-led movement against the genocide in Palestine has spread globally whilst forms of intensified repression and censorship against scholarship, scholars and students working on the question of Palestine across Global North contexts- that include, but not limited to Europe, north America and Oceania, continue unabated.

We understand this intensification as the result of historical processes which have transformed the academic and scholarly landscape in the new millennium: the consolidation of critical scholarship aimed at revealing the settler colonial nature of the Zionist occupation and the similarities with other settler colonial and imperial enterprises of the last centuries; the emergence of new scholarly and political discourses challenging Israel's regime of dispossession in Palestine; the development of academic solidarities with Palestinian scholars often happening through prominent scholarly faculty, students and/or affiliated organisations' endorsement of resolutions pertaining to the academic call for boycott brought forth by Palestinian academia, namely the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement in 2005; Palestinian ongoing and growing resistance against Israeli settler colonialism catalysed with the 2021 Unity Intifada where youth and women played a huge role in mobilising the uprising and combatting Israeli hasbara in both digital and battlefield spheres; the emergence of new political solidarities between scholars and advocates for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and liberation, and prominent anti-racist movements like Black Lives Matter and the NODAPL movements that are engaged in the protection of indigenous rights against new forms of colonial and capitalist dispossession from the US imperial core to the rest of the world; the recent genocide taking place against the Palestinians populace in the Gaza strip and the unfolding publication of a series of reports by the most prominent Palestinian, Israeli, and international human rights NGOs accusing the Zionist regime of the crime against humanity, genocide and apartheid. The roundtable will discuss some of the major contributions to the special issue, shedding light on scholarly findings on new techniques of suppression leading to the cancellation of events and speakers; attacks against individual scholars and students; public smearing campaigns; the suspension, sacking or denial of tenure against scholars (often Palestinian) working on the question of Palestine. New techniques include the concerted legal and complaint attacks orchestrated by pro-Zionist groups in collaboration with university students and faculty; the mobilization of the definition of antisemitism issued in 2016 by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance that has been adopted through political pressure in different academic contexts across multiple continents; the production of smearing dossiers and the weaponization of digital and electronic surveillance to target scholars and students.

The conversation will draw on the various contributions that the SI includes to shed light on the following themes:

- Discussing the theoretical angles on what we mean by the academic question of Palestine (Said 1992, Gramsci 1995);

- Discussing historical processes of intensified academic censorship and repression on the question of Palestine and the comparability to other contexts of mobilising for justice on university levels (South Africa anti-apartheid movement);
- Discussing the specific cases and individual experiences of repression and censorship that highlight the broader concerns of this thematic issue: from the mechanisms of attacking scholars and faculty members to tools of resistance and pushing back against the university's lack of due process and unjustified suppression of free speech.

#### **PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I – SHORT BIO OF PROPONENTS**

WALAA ALQAI SIYA is a Marie Curie Global Fellow based at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy. She is author of the book *Decolonial Queering in Palestine* (2022) and Associate Editor with the journal *Middle East Critique*. Her research spans the fields of indigenous ecologies, gender and sexuality studies, anti-imperialist, and decolonial theories.

NICOLA PERUGINI is Senior Lecturer in IR at the University of Edinburgh. His research focuses mainly on the politics of international law, human rights, and violence. He is the co-author of *The Human Right to Dominate* (2015), *Morbid Symptoms* (2017), and *Human Shields. A History of People in the Line of Fire* (2020).

MATTEO CAPASSO is Marie Curie Global Fellow based at the University of Venice, Italy. His research focuses on the impact of US-led imperialism across the modern Middle East and North Africa. He is the Editor of *Middle East Critique*, and the author of *Everyday Politics in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya* (2023) that reconstructs the events leading up to the 2011 NATO-led regime change operation in Libya.

ANDREA TETI is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Salerno. He is Managing Editor of *Middle East Critique* and has published widely on the politics of knowledge production, EU-Middle East relations, and on democratization and authoritarianism, including *The Arab Uprisings in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia* (2018) and *Democratization Against Democracy: How EU Policy Fails the Middle East* (2020).

MJRIAM ABU SAMRA is a Marie Curie Post-Doc Fellow between UC Davis, US and the University of Venice in Italy. Her research focuses on Palestinian transnational student and youth politics and Third World solidarities. Her work intervenes in the critical study of refugees, colonialisms, social movements and it is grounded on critical theories on subalternity and decolonization.

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