

## SPEAKERS

Harith AL-DABBAGH (University of Montreal, Canada)  
Salameh BISHARA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, Palestine)  
Judge Scarlet BISHARA (Court of First Instance, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, Palestine)  
Nora EL BIALY (University of Hamburg, Germany)  
Shéhérazade ELYAZIDI (Affiliate MPI Hamburg, Germany)  
Dörthe ENGELCKE (AGYA member / MPI Hamburg, Germany)  
Judge Christine FADDOUL (Greek Orthodox Court of Appeal, Amman, Jordan)  
Faraz FIROUZI MANDOMI (University of Hamburg, Germany)  
Ahmed FOUAD (British University in Egypt)  
Wafya HAMOUDA (Tanta University, Egypt)  
Mujtaba ISANI (AGYA member / Quaid-e-Azam University, Pakistan)  
Jeffrey G. KARAM (AGYA member / Lebanese American University, Lebanon)  
Ayad Yasin Husein KOKHA (Salahaddin University–Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq)  
Maya MIKDASHI (Rutgers University, USA)  
Lena-Maria MÖLLER (AGYA alumna / Qatar University, Qatar)  
Hoda NASRALLA (Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Egypt)  
Gianluca PAROLIN (The Aga Khan University (International), UK)  
Hanna PFEIFER (AGYA member / Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, Germany)  
Ari SCHRIEBER (Utrecht University, The Netherlands)  
Judge Bassam SHAHATIT (Court of First Instance of the Greek Melkite Church, Jordan)  
Lev WEITZ (The Catholic University of America, USA)  
Nadjma YASSARI (Swiss Institute of Comparative Law, Switzerland)  
Faouzia ZERAOULIA (AGYA Co-President / University of Jijel, Algeria)

Organized by the Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) and the Centre of Expertise for the Law of Arab and Islamic Countries, Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law (MPI), Hamburg

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*Lectures, symposia and other events may be filmed or photographed for AGYA's and MPI's own purposes.*

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Max-Planck-Institute for Comparative and International Private Law Hamburg  
Mittelweg 187, 20148 Hamburg, Tel: 040-41900-0, [www.mpipriv.de](http://www.mpipriv.de)

The institute is 30 minutes by public transports from the airport and five minutes walking distance from the railway station Hamburg-Dammtor, where most long-distance trains stop.

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**agya**  
ARAB-GERMAN  
YOUNG ACADEMY  
OF SCIENCES AND  
HUMANITIES

## International Conference

# MINORITY LAW IN ARAB STATES: GOVERNING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

14 – 15 July 2025



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## ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Arab states have adopted diverse approaches and employed varied strategies to institutionalize family laws and govern religious diversity often granting religious communities a great degree of legal autonomy. These approaches are shaped by historical, social, and political contexts, reflecting the complex interplay between law, religion, and governance. Compared to Muslim communities, the laws governing religious minorities in Arab states have received little scholarly attention, despite their prevalence, impact, and reform efforts, which they are subject to. Minorities are also disproportionately affected by conflict which exacerbates family law-related issues such as inheritance and property rights.

The conference foregrounds the complex interplay between legal autonomy and the governance of religious diversity. It brings together scholars from law, anthropology, political science, history and Middle Eastern studies as well as legal practitioners. The conference examines the complex interplay between legal pluralism, minority-state relations, gender and inter-religious relations. It analyzes the impact of colonial policies, regional conflicts, and reform movements on the development of minority law.

## MONDAY, 14 JULY 2025

- 12:30 Registration
- 12:45 Lunch
- 13:45 Welcome and introduction  
*Dörthe Engelcke*
- 13:50 Word of welcome by AGYA  
*Faouzia Zeraoulia*
- 14:00 Panel I: Jewish and Christian Litigants in Muslim Courts: Legal Agency, Adaptation, and Colonial Intervention**  
Chaired by *Lena-Maria Möller*
- Panelists:**  
*Ari Schriber* – Consenting to Shari‘a: Usurious Loans and Jewish Litigants in Colonial-Era Moroccan Shari‘a Courts  
*Wafya Hamouda* – Tracking Tannaim and Amoraim Torah Legislations in Sharia Court Records: A Cluster Analysis Study  
*Lev Weitz* – Law, Marriage, and Christian Community in Early Islam
- Discussant:** *Nadjma Yassari*
- 16:00 Coffee break
- 16:30 Keynote by Maya Mikdashi – Sextarianism: The Politics of Family Law in Lebanon**
- 17:30 End of first day
- 18:30 Conference dinner (speakers, chairs, and discussants)

## TUESDAY, 15 JULY 2025

- 9:30 Panel II: Law-Making and Adjudicating Christian Family Law: Judges’ and Practitioners’ Perspectives from Jordan and Palestine**  
Chaired by *Dörthe Engelcke*
- Panelists:**  
*Bassam Shahatit* – Challenges and Reforms in Jordanian Christian Family Law: A Melkite Judge’s Perspective  
*Christine Faddoul* – The Impact of Appointing Women Judges in the Christian Courts of Jordan  
*Scarlet Bishara* – Discrimination and Gender Justice in the Ecclesiastical Personal Status Laws in Palestine: Experiences from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land  
*Salameh Bishara* – Reforming the Personal Status Law of the Evangelical Lutheran Community in Jordan and the Holy Land of the Year 2015
- 11:30 Coffee break
- 12:00 Panel III: The Intersection of Law, Religion, and Gender: Inheritance and Legal Pluralism in Egypt**  
Chaired by *Jeffrey G. Karam*
- Panelists:**  
*Gianluca Parolin* – Totemic Inheritance: The Court of Cassation and the Limits of Religious Diversity in Egypt’s Personal Status Law  
*Hoda Nasralla* – Advocating for Inheritance Law Reform  
*Nora El Bialy and Ahmed Fouad* – When Customs Overthrow State Law: Evidence from Egypt
- 14:00 Lunch
- 15:00 Panel IV: Minority Law and Contested Authority: The Interplay of Conflict, Sectarianism, and Identity Formation in Iraq**  
Chaired by *Hanna Pfeifer*
- Panelists:**  
*Ayad Yasin Husein Kokha and Faraz Firouzi Mandomi* – Legal Recognition of a Minority Within a Minority: The Accommodation of Yazidi Personal Status Law in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq  
*Harith Al-Dabbagh* – Personal Status in Iraq or the Tower of Babel: The Rise and Fall of a Torn Identity  
*Shéhérazade Elyazidi* – Rewriting the Family: Gender, Identity, and Legal Reform in the Kurdish Personal Status Law of 2008
- Discussant:** *Mujtaba Işani*
- 17:00 Closing discussion