



Dear colleagues, students, and friends of CMES,

As the academic year comes to a close, I want to convey a few words of gratitude to all of you who have been participating in, attending, and supporting the Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) over the past year. Thanks to my inspiring guests and the wonderful help of our Center manager, Barbara Oberkoetter, we managed to cover a wide range of issues and connect with audiences across the globe. Last year we had over 9,000 viewings of our on-line events in addition to those we hosted on campus. We have created a substantial archive of events and conversations that you can access on our [website](#).

Amongst the range of different events we hosted, I would like to highlight the Herbert H. Goldberger-funded lecture series titled *Queering the Middle East*, to which we invited academics and activists to discuss the various ways queer approaches and activism further our understanding of the Middle East and its diasporas, while also contributing to our aim to de-exceptionalize the Middle East.

I am excited to announce a new series we have launched jointly with the Columbia University Middle East Institute (MEI) titled *Gender and Body Politics: Arts in the Middle East and its Diasporas*. In conversation with artists from the Middle East and North Africa as well as its diasporas, the series examines intersecting inequalities and body politics expressed, represented, and transgressed in both visual and performance art. Against the backdrop of war and conflict, the rise of authoritarian regimes, displacement and diaspora mobilization, Islamophobia, ongoing orientalist depictions, and challenges linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, this series explores the ways in which artists are informed by and/or contribute to anti-racist, transnational feminist, and queer praxis.

The series will feature artists both online and in-person. Exhibitions and performances will complement the series in locations around Providence and New York City. On April 26, we launched the series with two Palestinian artists, [Ruanne Abou-Rahme](#) and [Basel Abbas](#), in an online conversation named "[May Amnesia Never Kiss Us On The Mouth](#)," followed by an in-person event on May 5 titled "[The Politics of Queer Bots](#)."

I was particularly happy to welcome our three visiting Darwish Fellows in Palestinian Studies, Professors [Rema Hammami](#), [Ruba Salih](#), and [Noura Erakat](#). Next academic year, we will be fortunate to have [Abed Takriti](#) join us for one academic year as Darwish Visiting Professor in Palestinian Studies. We have also appointed our first CMES / Watson Alomran postdoctoral fellow in Middle East studies. [Fulya Pinar](#) will be with us for two years following completion of her PhD at Rutgers university.

Our annual report provides more details about our activities, projects, and initiatives.

I hope you all have a healthy, fulfilling, and interesting summer. We look forward to connecting with you in the new academic year.

Best wishes,

Nadje Al-Ali
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