



SALZBURG
GLOBAL
SEMINAR

SESSION
SUMMARY

508

Getting Transition Right: A Rights-Based Approach to Diversity and Inclusivity

SALZBURG
GLOBAL
SEMINAR

الصندوق العربي لحقوق الانسان
ARAB HUMAN RIGHTS FUND
FONDS ARABE POUR LES DROITS HUMAINS



Summary Report

Aimee Thomson

Consultant, Arab Human Rights Fund

“Diversity is what we have. Inclusion is making diversity work,” said a Salzburg Global Fellow at the end of the Session 508, Getting Transition Right: A Rights-Based Approach to Diversity and Inclusivity. Indeed, the Arab region is full of diverse voices that have often struggled to work cohesively.

Despite coming together to demand change in 2011, fracture lines within these revolutionary countries seem more prevalent than ever. In light of the unique challenges facing MENA countries in transition, approximately forty activists, influencers and knowledge-bearers from across the Arab region and around the world gathered at Schloss Leopoldskron, home of Salzburg Global Seminar to confront a basic question: how can civil society encourage these countries to embrace diversity and foster inclusion?

Co-organized with the Arab Human Rights Fund, an Arab grantmaking organization dedicated to supporting human rights actors across the Arab region, the program brought together a variety of voices and experiences to help identify strategic directions for improved inclusivity to aid transition processes in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen. These countries were selected specifically because they are



Fellows of Session 508 – Getting Transition Right: A Rights-Based Approach to Diversity and Inclusivity

“Despite coming together to demand change in 2011, fracture lines within these revolutionary countries seem more prevalent than ever.”

in the midst of difficult transitions and can pilot new approaches to diversity and inclusion for the Arab region. Salzburg Global Fellows came from a dozen countries and included civil society activists, human rights experts, academics, grantmakers, researchers, and media experts. Plenary sessions focused on regional realities, local and international laws, policy development, and methods of shifting public perception, while working groups led by delegates from each of the four focus countries addressed local challenges and crafted policy recommendations.

As was revealed throughout Session 508, diversity in the region cuts along multiple axes: gender, religion, culture, race, ethnicity, age, physical ability, and geographic location. Excluded communities weave among and beyond these categories to further include refugees, migrant workers, stateless persons, and those of unpopular political affiliations. In attempting to discern how civil society can encourage the integration of these communities, delegates wrestled with the dueling requirements of law and culture. Both must shift if these countries are to truly champion a spirit of inclusion, but can law be truly effective without deep seated popular values and discourse as well as a culture that demands respect of diversity is able to demand inclusivity while accepting, obeying, and enforcing the laws? Alternatively, can culture evolve effectively without the galvanizing force of law?

In the final session, the working groups for Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen presented their recommendations and outlined a working plan for moving forward.

Country Recommendations

The Egyptian Fellows identified two key goals: to deconstruct the existing binary of favoring either the Muslim Brotherhood or the military, and to combat the popular attitude that inclusion in general and human rights norms in particular are mere “Western values”. With these aims in mind, the Egyptian delegation presented seven policy recommendations. First, they plan to form coalitions of mutual interest by identifying and bringing together actors from civil society and the government who share similar interests. Second, they propose to establish administrative units made of both civil society and government actors to carry out these projects. Third, the Fellows will take advantage of a number of existing laws and policies to advocate for more inclusive application and enforcement. Fourth, the Egyptian delegation will encourage the integration of civil society actors within the government to allow political leaders to take advantage of activists’ expertise. Fifth, collaborative efforts will urge reform of institutional mechanisms to enforce existing codes of ethics. Sixth, the Fellows propose a serious engagement with transitional justice and truth and reconciliation. Finally, the Fellows will push for affirmative action programs and quotas for minority groups.

“ Diversity in the region cuts along multiple axes: gender, religion, culture, race, ethnicity, age, physical ability, and geographic location. ”

In response to broad fragmentation within Libyan society, the Libyan delegation framed their intervention as “strength in diversity.” To work towards a unified Libyan identity, the Fellows focused on the three unifying pillars of common purpose, acceptance, and tolerance. The Libyan delegation then presented five general objectives to carry this goal forward. First, they plan to build diversity awareness by developing a multi-stakeholder media and communications strategy that will seek to entrench citizen rights and responsibilities. Second, the Fellows want to build the capacity of civil society through trainings and workshops that will allow activists to effectively promote diversity and inclusion. Third, the delegates will develop regional collaborative linkages on diversity to facilitate the exchange of experiences on tolerance, acceptance, and common purpose. Fourth, the Libyan delegation plans to create an inclusive task force made up of civil society members, youth activists, and legal experts to lobby for articles of inclusion in the to-be-drafted constitution. Finally, Fellows will identify champions for diversity and secure the sustainability of concerted efforts through regional and international fundraising.

The Tunisian participants divided its assessment between civil and political rights and socio-economic rights, identifying youth, religious minorities, former regime officials, and women as the most marginalized groups within the former category and youth, persons with disabilities, and citizens living in the interior regions of the country as the most excluded in the latter category. For the youth, the Fellows outlined a multi-pronged approach that will advocate both for greater political equality and influence and for merit-based economic opportunities. With respect to the country’s religious minorities, and especially its Jewish population, the Fellows expressed determination to change the proposed constitutional language that limits the presidency to a member of the Muslim faith. Among the long-neglected interior regions, the Tunisian delegation proposed local community empowerment efforts to enable local governments to first join together to solve local conflicts and second work together to demand greater rights on a national level. Finally, existing laws need to be enforced and strengthened to promote greater socio-political participation among Tunisians with disabilities.

Cognizant of the steep legal, social, and cultural hurdles facing women and girls across Yemen, the Yemeni delegation focused on encouraging the inclusion and empowerment of this critical population into Yemen’s socio-political sphere. Targeting government and civil society simultaneously, the Yemeni Fellows laid out a multi-stage approach with fixed goals for two and five years aimed at creating sustainable progress in the areas of governance, health, gender-based violence, employment and economic activities, and education and society. Within the government, advocacy efforts include the criminalization of violence against women, promulgation of laws establishing the minimum age to marry at 18, establishment of quotas for women’s participation in all branches of government,

“ Can law be truly effective without deep seated popular values and discourse as well as a culture that demands respect of diversity is able to demand inclusivity while accepting, obeying, and enforcing the laws? Alternatively, can culture evolve effectively without the galvanizing force of law? ”

“ There is a great pool of passion and talent in the region; this now needs to be harnessed through knowledge exchange and capacity building. ”

and gender mainstreaming of language in laws, policies, and educational curricula. Among civil society, the Yemeni Fellows will push for capacity-building efforts among local and national NGOs, awareness campaigns on women’s rights, and the creation of popular education centers to facilitate dialogue exchange.

Next Steps

For a region that severely lacked a strong – in some countries, any – civil society before the uprisings, what became increasingly apparent throughout the four presentations was the number of groups already working towards many of the goals identified by the Fellows. What is needed now, as the Fellows return to their home countries, be they one of the four focus countries or elsewhere in the world, is improved linkages and support between these various groups to amplify their impact. There is a great pool of passion and talent in the region; this now needs to be harnessed through knowledge exchange and capacity building. Participants recognized that while actions need to be focused locally and nationally, regional information-sharing and strategizing helped them to see specific challenges in a new light and gave them fresh ideas on how to reframe challenges and implement new approaches.

To this end, as the Fellows left Salzburg, the work of the participants, as well as Salzburg Global Seminar and the Fund continues. The organizers will seek to support the participants continued efforts to formulate “roadmaps” and craft clearer policy recommendations, working with a larger and more diverse set of stakeholders, of how to achieve greater inclusion and diversity across the region.



Schloss Leopoldskron, Salzburg, home of Salzburg Global Seminar and venue of session 508

ABOUT THE REPORT CONTRIBUTOR:

Aimee Thomson is an American second-year law student at New York University (NYU) School of Law, where she focuses on international human rights law as well as privacy and civil liberties in the context of national security. She currently serves as legal chair for the NYU chapter of the Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), a law student-driven organization that provides legal services to Arab and Afghan refugees seeking resettlement in the United States. She has previously interned with the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) as a Ford Foundation Law School Public Interest fellow. Prior to law school, Ms. Thomson served as the operations and compliance officer for the Arab Human Rights Fund (AHRF), and continues to support its work as a consultant. She holds a B.A. in political science and physics from Colorado College and has studied Arabic in Lebanon, Syria and Tunisia.

www.salzburgglobal.org/go/508

Salzburg Global Seminar is grateful to the following donors for their generous support of Session 508

The Arab Human Rights Fund

Additional scholarship support:

The Netherlands Group

Ford Foundation

The Nippon Foundation

The McKnight Foundation

Whitney and Elizabeth MacMillan

BMWF

Capital Group Companies

Salzburg Global Seminar would like to thank the Session speakers for their assistance in developing this program and for generously donating their time and expertise, and to all the participants that contributed their intellectual capital and superior ideas.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Nancy Smith

Program Director

nsmith@salzburgglobal.org

Ginte Stankeviciute

Program Associate

gstankeviciute@salzburgglobal.org

Clare Shine

Vice President and Chief Program Officer

cshine@salzburgglobal.org

Salzburg Global Seminar

Salzburg Global Seminar was founded in 1947 by Austrian and American students from Harvard University. Convinced that former enemies must talk and learn from each other in order to create more stable and secure societies, they set out to create a neutral international forum for those seeking to regenerate Europe and shape a better world. Guided by this vision, we have brought over 31,000 participants together from 160 countries for more than 500 sessions and student academies across cultural and ideological barriers to address common challenges. Our track record is unique – connecting young and established leaders, and supporting regions, institutions and sectors in transition.

Salzburg Global's program strategy is driven by our Mission to challenge present and future leaders to solve issues of global concern. We work with partners to help people, organizations and governments bridge divides and forge paths for peace, empowerment and equitable growth.

Our three Program Clusters - Imagination, Sustainability and Justice - are guided by our commitment to tackle systems challenges critical for next generation leaders and engage new voices to 're-imagine the possible'. We believe that advances in education, science, culture, business, law and policy must be pursued together to reshape the landscape for lasting results. Our strategic convening is designed to address gaps and faultlines in global dialogue and policy making and to translate knowledge into action.

Our programs target new issues ripe for engagement and 'wicked' problems where progress has stalled. Building on our deep experience and international reputation, we provide a platform where participants can analyze blockages, identify shared goals, test ideas, and create new strategies. Our recruitment targets key stakeholders, innovators and young leaders on their way to influence and ensures dynamic perspectives on a given topic.

Our exclusive setting enables our participants to detach from their working lives, immerse themselves in the issues at hand and form new networks and connections. Participants come together on equal terms, regardless of age, affiliation, region or sector.

We maintain this energy and engagement through the Salzburg Global Network, which connects our Fellows across the world. It provides a vibrant hub to crowd-source new ideas, exchange best practice, and nurture emerging leaders through mentoring and support. The Network leverages our extraordinary human capital to advise on critical trends, future programs and in-region implementation.