

Striking from the Margins:

Religion, State and Disintegration in the Middle East

Bi-weekly research seminar

Dr Laura Ruiz de Elvira

(CEPED, Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, France)

Bashar al-Asad's political engineering and the rupture of the social contract (2000-2010). A glimpse through the prism of the charitable sector

Abstract: “Change based on continuity” was the slogan of Bashar al-Asad’s first years in power back in 2000. That change materialized in the form of a partial opening of the economy and the civic sector as well as in an important rise of charitable associations, to which social responsibilities were outsourced. However, new tools of control, disciplinarization, cooptation and repression were conceived and put into practice. Based on a two-year fieldwork conducted between 2007 and 2010 in Syria, the lecture will address the main characteristics of what Ruiz de Elvira calls Bashar al-Asad’s “political engineering”. She will argue that subcontracting poor-relief measures to charities and non-state actors eroded the regime’s political legitimacy and helped sow the seeds of the 2011 uprising.

Dr Laura Ruiz de Elvira is a permanent researcher at the French Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD). She holds a double degree in political science and in Arabic and has previously been a post-doctoral researcher at the CNMS in Marburg University (Germany) and at the IREMAM in Aix-en-Provence (France). Her research interests focus on charities, commitment, social movements, politicization, social policies and political crisis in Syria and in Tunisia.

She is the author, together with Tina Zintl, of *Civil Society and the State in Syria: The Outsourcing of Social Responsibility* (Lynne Rienner, 2012).



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