

Digital Activism and Authoritarian Adaptation in the Middle East

May 25, 27; June 1, 3, 2021

Panel 1: Digital Activism

Tuesday, May 25, 2021 | 9-10:30 am PT

Opening Remarks: **Marc Lynch**, **Eileen Donahoe**, and **Larry Diamond**

Moderator: **Hesham Sallam**

- **Wafa Ben-Hassine**: "The Hyper-Aware and Not-So-Aware: What's Next for the MENA Region's Activists and Society at Large Vis-a-Vis the Internet?"
- **Adel Iskander**: "Re(Membering) Culture and Heritage: Egypt's Latest Political Turf War"
- **Zachary Steinert-Threlkeld**: "Civilian Behavior on Social Media During Civil War"
- **Joshua Tucker**: "Beyond Liberation Technology? The Recent Uses of Social Media by Pro-Democracy Activists"

Panel 2: Authoritarian Abuses of Internet Technologies

Thursday, May 27, 2021 | 9-10:30 am PT

Moderator: **Marc Lynch**

- **Marwa Fatafta**: "Transnational or Cross-Border Digital Repression in the MENA Region"
- **Andrew Leber**: "Social Media Manipulation in the MENA: Inauthenticity, Inequality, and Insecurity" (Co-authored paper with **Alexei Abrahams**)
- **Marc Owen Jones**: "Tracking Adversaries: The Evolution of Manipulation Tactics on Gulf Twitter"
- **Xiao Qiang**: "Chinese Digital Authoritarianism and Its Global Impact"

Panel 3: Government Reshaping of Norms and Practices to Constrain Online Activity

Tuesday, June 1, 2021 | 9-10:30 am PT

Moderator: **Eileen Donahoe**

- **Ahmed Shaheed**: "Binary Threat: How State Cyber Policy and Practice Undermines Human Rights in the Middle East and North Africa Region"
- **Mona Elswah, Mahsa Alimardani**: "The Hurdles Involved in Content Moderation in the MENA Region"
- **Mohamed Najem**: "The Role of the Gulf in Governing Digital Space in the Arab Region"
- **James Shires**: "The Techno-Regulation of Critical Communications Infrastructures and Their Political Potential in the Gulf"
- **Alexei Abrahams**: "The Web (In)Security of Middle Eastern Civil Society and Media"

Panel 4: Cross-Border Information Operations

Thursday, June 3, 2021 | 9-10:30 am PT

Moderator: **Larry Diamond**

- **Alexandra Siegel**: "Official Foreign Influence Operations: Transnational State Media in the Arab Online Sphere"
- **Hamit Akin Unver**: "Russian Disinformation Operations in Turkey: 2015-2020"
- **Shelby Grossman, Renee DiResta**: "In-House vs. Outsourced Trolls: How Digital Mercenaries Shape State Influence Strategies"
- **Nathaniel Gleicher**: "Covert Manipulation, Overt Influence, Direct Exploit: Understanding and Countering Influence Operations in the Middle East and Beyond"

List of Participants

Alexei Abrahams, University of Toronto

Mahsa Alimardani, Oxford University, Doctoral Researcher at the OII, Researcher at ARTICLE19

Wafa Ben-Hassine, Omidyar Network

Larry Diamond, Stanford University

Renee DiResta, Stanford University

Eileen Donahoe, Stanford University

Mona Elswah, Oxford University

Marwa Fatafta, Access Now

Nathaniel Gleicher, Facebook

Shelby Grossman, Stanford University

Adel Iskandar, Simon Fraser University

Marc Owen Jones, Hamad bin Khalifa University

Andrew Leber, Harvard University

Marc Lynch, The George Washington University

Mohammed Najem, Social Media Exchange

Xiao Qiang, University of California Berkeley

Hesham Sallam, Stanford University

Ahmed Shaheed, University of Essex

James Shires, Leiden University

Alexandra Siegel, University of Colorado - Boulder

Zachary Steinert-Threlkeld, University of California Los Angeles

Joshua Tucker, New York University

Hamit Akin Unver, Kadir Has University