

Call for Papers: Special Issue of Contention Journal (Spring 2016)

Editors: Brian Callan (Loughborough University)

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Civil Society and Uncivil Times

The beginning of this decade witnessed a wave of civil mobilization across the globe, with impressive instances bursting forth along the Mediterranean rim. Resistance to capitalist excesses, technocratic austerity and embedded authoritarian regimes, seemed to unite and inspire civil societies across North Africa, the Middle East and southern Europe. There was hope and fear of radical social change and even talk of revolution, both on the streets and in academic debate. Five years passed. Now, improbable state alliances pummel Syria and Iraq from the safety of the skies. Brutal conflict forces families to flee in their millions, to nearby camps, across the seas and along cold, distant back-roads. Europe evokes right-wing sentiments, suspends open border agreements and invokes states of emergency. Lethal terror claims sovereignty in the east and falls upon the citizens of Turkey, Beirut, Paris, Mali and tourists from St. Petersburg. The corpses of children are washing up on the shore.

There are profound, uncomfortable and pressing questions to be asked now, and the social sciences must attempt to provide meaningful answers. There is darkness, fear and hatred and stark expressions of suspicion and intolerance, from both political elites and civil society. Yet there are also expressions and practices of compassion across the entire region, and acknowledgements of complexity and complicity which exist side-by-side with belligerence. This special issue aims to bring nuanced detail to the simplified polarised proclamations which claim to define this complex, transnational crisis. How does non-violent resistance resist instrumental brutality, and can it prevail? Can there be understanding between migrants driven by desperation, volunteers compelled by compassion, and local communities overwhelmed by a sea of need? How are antagonisms reinforced and restrained by local and distant events, technologies and institutions? With emphasis on the Mediterranean rim, we call for research insights and personal reflections upon expressions of universal humanism and polarising isolationism, on practices of dissent and repression, and on civil resistance in suspicious times and spaces of brutal violence.

For further details & submission contact:

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Please read the notes 1-5 below for guidance on essay form, format and deadlines.

Notes:

1. This special issue of contention is to be published in Spring 2016 and, given the pressing need for nuanced accounts at a time of panicking rhetoric in the public sphere, we will conduct a more swift review process than usual, trusting the process to the journal's editors where possible. Papers may thus include personal reflections by notable researchers and practitioners in their field.
2. Given the nature of this special issue, authors are free to feel less constrained by standard structures of academic literature and we shall accept submissions of varying lengths (1-6000 words).
3. Articles should be formatted following APA style. Manuscripts should include an abstract of maximum 250 words and a cover page with a biographical note about the authors.
4. For this particular issue, submission should be directed to Brian Callan (Email: callanbri@gmail.com). Please specify in the cover letter that the submission are for the special issue.
5. Deadline: January 31st 2016