



Wednesday, 20 February 2019, 14:00-15:30

**NORA LAFI** (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin)

## “Reflecting on Post-Imperial and Post-Colonial Legacies: the 2015 Berlin ‘Refugee Crisis’ as a mirror of the history of the Middle East”

In the context of the arrival of more than 100.000 refugees and migrants in Berlin in 2015-2016, mainstream interpretations generally failed to reflect on connections of spatial and temporal nature between Europe and the Middle East. The object of this lecture is to explore such under-researched relationships and specifically the way they do fashion present-day situations under the form of inertias of historical nature. In addition to the inertia of logics that relate to the Cold War era, it seems indeed that historical configurations inherited from Ottoman imperial times and from the era of colonial empires had a crucial importance in the shaping of the events that started in 2010-2011. Among the themes this lecture is addressing are: the importance of the imperial Ottoman geography of the region; the relevance of procedures of social mediation that were part of the Ottoman imperial governance of diversity; the inertia of the Ottoman definition of élites, identities, communities and individuals; echoes from the times in which European powers challenged the Ottoman sovereignty over the region; the lasting impact on the *longue durée* of the decisions that were made by European colonial powers during World War I (Sykes-Picot agreement, Balfour declaration...); the importance of colonial categories in the classification of populations; the colonial framework of the definition of the various nationalisms that shaped the region; the colonial origins of the borders between the States of the region; the colonial origins of some instrumentalizations of religion; the inertia of colonial forms of political violence.



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