



**RESEARCH WORKSHOP:**

**‘Workers organisations, social demands and public policies’**

Organised by Aurora Sottimano (OIB) in collaboration with Elisabeth Longuenesse (IFPO)

Date: 17 November 2012  
Venue: Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB)

9 – 9.30 **Keynote speaker:** Elisabeth Longuenesse, Director  
Department of Contemporary Studies, French Institute for the Near East (IFPO)

9,30 – 11,15 **Panel 1** **Trade unions in post-war Lebanon**

Introduction: Ghassan Slaiby  
Sub-Regional Secretary, Arab Countries, Public Service International

Castro Abdallah President of FENASOL, Federation of Lebanese Workers Unions  
Abdel Amir Najde President of Federation of Public Cars Drivers for Land Transport Unions

The panel will discuss the recent history of the Lebanese labour movement, with a focus on the process of fragmentation of the labour movement after 1994: is this a result of the conflict and its precarious ‘balance of peace’; a consequence of globalization and changed paradigms and discourses (from socialism to the market); or the outcome of domestic struggles peculiar to Lebanese politics? The panel will analyse the relation between unions, local federations and the General Federation of Trade Unions as well as the role/input of the General Federation in the making of relevant public policies.

11,15 – 11,30 Break

11,30 – 13,15 **Panel 2** **Niqabat and rawabit: Workers’ demands and social issues**

Introduction: Adib Bou Habib  
General Secretary of Printing Press Employees Union and  
President of the Lebanese Trade Union Training Centre

Hanna Gharib President of Public Secondary School Teachers League  
Georges Hajj President of the Federation of Bank Workers Union  
Kamal Mawlud President of the Union of North Lebanon Water Establishment Workers  
Discussant: Farah Kobaissy  
Lebanese Observatory for the Rights of Workers and Employees

The panel will analyse activities and programs of specific Lebanese workers’ organisations, identified as relatively more representative and active than most unions, and less related to political parties, and will question the reasons of their success. It will address the way they articulate workers’ demands and their platforms for action regarding workers’ rights and welfare.



What proportion of their rank and file participates to unions activities, to internal elections and to specific mobilizations? What is the relation between leadership and ordinary members?

The panel will also analyse to which point unions reach wider society issues and their role in advancing a widespread demand for social justice.

The aim of this panel is to assess the interdependence between the internal organisation of unions and their effectiveness; to map policy proposals emerging from below; and to review successes and obstacles of workers' organisations in putting forward labour demands, connecting their demands with wider social issues, and eventually transforming such demands into public policies

13,15 – 14,30                      Lunch break

14,30 – 15,30                      **Panel 3**                      **Egyptian Experiences**

Tarek Moustafa    General Secretary, Real Estate Tax Authority Union, Cairo  
Hussein El Masry    Training Coordinator, Centre for Trade Union Services, Helwan  
Discussant:            Ghassan Slaiby, Sub-Regional Secretary, Arab Countries  
Public Service International

In Egypt, workers mobilizations were numerous and frequent during the decade that preceded the revolution. Several independent unions had already come to existence, after important struggles. The revolution has accelerated the movement, and social struggles have increased during the last two years. Two actors of these mobilizations will present the new social landscape, the strategies of the labour movement, its successes and failures.

15,30 – 17,15                      **Panel 4**                      **New actors in the Lebanese workers' movement**

Introduction:                      Bassem Chit  
Socialist forum - al Muntada al-Ishtiraki, Beirut  
  
Lubnan Makhoul                  President of Electricity Workers League  
Samir Tawk                      Spinneys Workers Union  
Mohammad Mansour              Public Sector Cooperative Workers  
Mohammad Boukhari              Hariri Hospital Workers  
  
Discussant:                      Ziyad Abdel Samad, Executive Director  
Arab NGO Network for Development

Many categories of workers in Lebanon are excluded from official work organisations, yet the last few months have seen a surge of spontaneous strikes and sit-ins and the emergence of new workers organisations. This panel will examine their demands; their relation with existing *niqabat* and *rawabit*; and the obstacles they face in reaching out to public opinion and policy makers' attention.

Besides mapping a constellation of issues and networks at the periphery of the legally organised labour movement, the panel will discuss the changes in perspectives - at the domestic and regional level - which facilitated the emergence of parts of the labour movement hitherto unheard of.

Participants:

Lebanese associations

Milad Barakat, President, Spinneys Workers Union  
Antoine Bechara, former head of General Federation of Trade Unions in Lebanon  
Kamal Hamdan, Director, Consultation and Research Institute  
Riad Isa, activist and workers representative at OGERO

International Organisations:

Samir Farah, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Beirut  
Gisela Nauk, ESCWA, Social Policies Department, Beirut  
Nabil Abdo National Coordinator for "Strengthening Workers' Organizations in the Arab Countries through Economic Social and Legal Literacy Project" ILO, Beirut

Media commentators

Salwa Baalbeki, al-Nahar, Beirut  
Hasan Lhaf, journalist, Beirut  
Wissam Matta, al-Safir, Beirut  
Mohammad Zbeeb, al-Akhbar, Beirut

Researchers /academics

Marie Noelle Abi Yaghi , Researcher, IFPO  
Nicolas Dot-Pouillard, Researcher, IFPO  
Georges Kadige, Director, Centre d'études des droits du monde arabe (CEDROMA), USJ  
Manfred Sing, Research Associate, OIB