

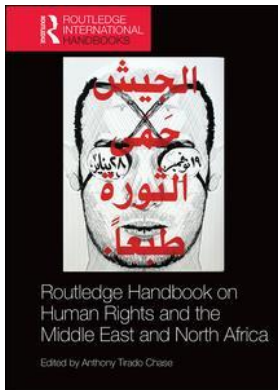
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3

ECONOMIC RIGHTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat

Introduction¹

Human rights issues in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are usually discussed in relation to authoritarian governance and state repression of political rights. However, as demonstrated by the Arab Spring, social and economic rights and issues of economic justice are equally important to the population living in the MENA region.² Public opinion surveys show people's emphasis on economic rights and related issues:

A 2005 poll conducted by Zogby International found that expanding employment opportunities, improving health care and educational systems, and ending corruption were the most important priorities of citizens across the region. Democracy and civic and political rights, though also cited, were ranked lower than socioeconomic concerns . . . Similarly, the 2010 Arab Youth Survey found that the greatest perceived challenge and concern of Arab youth was the cost of living, followed by unemployment and then human rights.³

This chapter focuses on economic rights, which can be defined differently. In the international human rights law they are blended with social rights and mentioned under the heading of economic and social rights, including: the freedom and right to form a family; the rights to food, housing, shelter, clothing, education; the right to health and health care; the rights to work, livable wages, rest, join unions, collective bargaining, strike; and the right to social security, among others. While the interrelatedness of economic and social issues makes a neat classification of rights as 'economic' and 'social' difficult in practice, the philosophical framework employed in the international forums on human rights has also led the members of the United Nations and supporters of human rights to repeatedly stress the *interdependency* and *indivisibility* of rights, along with their *universality*.⁴ In this chapter, I focus on the rights to employment, livable wage/income, and food, as the central economic rights and address the rights to education and health care, water, housing and social security as most closely related to those rights.⁵ Despite this selection, however, I subscribe to the school of thought that endorses the interdependency and indivisibility of not only social and economic rights but all rights, including the civil and political rights. In fact, in my discussion of the above-mentioned rights in the MENA context, I intend to show that the violations of rights in one domain are linked to the violations

in others, and military conflicts and warfare, which involve violence and are discriminatory by default, aggravate them all.

The data and analyses presented here should be received with two caveats. First, although they display some distinct characteristics as a region, the MENA countries' attitude toward and record of economic rights are not much different from the rest of the world. Second, within the region there are significant differences in government policies and human rights experiences of people. In addition to the discrepancies between the oil-rich countries and poorer/aid-dependent countries,⁶ people's experiences within each country show variation depending on their class, citizenship, sex, and other characteristics. As is the case everywhere, lower classes, women, migrants, children and refugees encounter more problems and are less likely to enjoy economic rights. Although I approach the discussion of rights in the region as cognizant of the diversity and different experiences, this chapter inevitably includes some sweeping statements and generalizations due to the concerns of space and for the sake of parsimony.

Participation in the international human rights regime

Within the United Nations-led human rights regime, economic rights were articulated first in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the General Assembly (GA) of the United Nations (U.N.) in 1948. They were then elaborated on in the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which was adopted on December 16, 1966, and entered into force on January 3, 1976, in accordance with Article 27, when 35 countries ratified the treaty.

The attitude and behavior of the MENA countries in these processes were not different from those of other countries. Several MENA countries actively participated in the drafting process of these two documents, and many became a party to the ICESCR. A key intellectual contributor to the drafting of the UDHR at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights was Charles Malik of Lebanon, who also chaired the Third Committee that finalized the draft before it was submitted to the GA for voting. The minutes of the Third Committee discussions show interventions by Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria.⁷ When the Declaration was adopted with only eight abstentions, only one MENA country, Saudi Arabia abstained. Saudi Arabia's main objections were related to Article 18 on freedom of thought and religion and to some provisions on family.^{8,9,10}

Economic and social rights were widely supported by the MENA countries, particularly by Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria, which also opposed having two separate covenants.¹¹ Drafting the Covenants involved more countries, since the process of decolonization, accelerated in the 1950s and 1960s, expanded the U.N. membership. Those who were actively involved in discussions included men and women from the MENA region: Charles Malik (Lebanon), Jamil Baroody (Saudi Arabia), Karim Azkoul (Lebanon), Halima Embarek Warzazi (Morocco), Omar Loutfi (Egypt), Bedia Afnan (Iraq), Jawaat Mufti (Syria), and Mahmoud Azmi (Egypt).¹²

At the time of voting for the ICESCR, 15 MENA countries were represented at the GA (Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen). Except Syria, which did not participate in the voting, all voted for the Covenant. As seen in Table 3.1, about half of these countries also ratified the Covenant before December 1976, thus helping it to enter into force.

Although many of these countries placed declarations or reservations on the Covenant in most cases the content of the declaration/reservation is not consequential for the fulfillment of the state's human rights obligations. They are either interpretive (Algeria) or political,

Table 3.1 MENA Countries' Position on the ICESCR

Country	Date of Signature	Date of Ratification
Algeria	1968	1989 ^a
Bahrain		2007 ^a
Djibouti		2002
Egypt	1967	1982
Iran	1968	1975
Iraq	1969	1971^{a,b}
Jordan	1972	1975
Kuwait		1996 ^{a,b}
Lebanon		1972
Libya		1970^a
Morocco	1977	1979
Oman		
Qatar		
Saudi Arabia		1986
Sudan		
Syria		1969^a
Tunisia	1968	1969
Turkey	2000	2003 ^{a,b}
United Arab Emirates		
Yemen		1987 ^a
Palestine	N/A	N/A

Source: Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-3&chapter=4&lang=en (Accessed June 11, 2015).

Notes: ^aDeclaration at the time of signature or ratification.

^bReservation placed at the time of signature or ratification.

stressing that the ratification of the treaty does not entail the recognition of Israel (Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen). Only those placed by Bahrain, Kuwait, and Turkey comprise some restrictions on obligations.

A systematic comparison of the MENA with other regions is not a purpose of this paper, but it is reasonable to conclude that the participation, ratification and reservation rates by the MENA countries are not significantly different from others. An exceptional cluster may be the Gulf countries, but ratifications by Bahrain and Kuwait spoil such a categorization, as well.

The right to employment

The causes of the protest movements that swept several countries in the MENA region in 2011 and came to be known as 'the Arab Spring' were multiple and simmering for a long time. The triggering event, however, took place on December 17, 2010, when Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old unemployed Tunisian engineer, protested the police's confiscation of his fruit stand—his last resort to make a living—through self-immolation. His act resonated in many countries, because long-term unemployment, especially among the youth, has been a major problem in the region. With the rapid population increase, the work force in the region has been increasing at the fastest rate in the world, without a comparable increase in demand for labor.¹³

Unemployment rate can be taken as a crude indicator of the violation of the right to employment. Based on 2005 figures, the International Labour Organisation delineated the MENA as the region with the highest unemployment rate.¹⁴ While it tends to be higher among rural, young, educated and female populations, the scope of unemployment and the affected population varies from country to country.

Since the economic structure of oil-exporting rich countries is very different from that of aid-dependent poorer countries, the labor markets of these two groups differ, as well. In the former, petro dollars have allowed significant improvements in the standard of living, but the dependency on a single capital-intensive sector has not created many employment opportunities. However, the wealth generated from oil fueled some other sectors such as construction and tourism in some countries, but the jobs were filled by workers imported first from other countries in the region and later from South Asia.¹⁵ The consequence became “segmented labor markets” that include “two separate employment regimes: one for nationals who are primarily absorbed in the public sector and the other for migrants who end up in private sector jobs.”¹⁶ While some oil rich countries need to import labor due to their labor shortage, others prefer foreign workers for their higher skills, lower cost, or docility. The Sultanate of Oman, for example, is noted for its relatively high unemployment rates, especially among women and youth, yet it still employs imported labor.¹⁷

Thus, while unemployment haunts citizens, the other employment related human rights violations affect the migrant workers most. In addition to lacking access to several social services available to the citizens, their work environment and conditions tend to be unsafe, especially for the unskilled laborers. Domestic workers, usually women from Asian countries and preferred for their docility, are particularly vulnerable. Moreover, migrant workers lack job security. Following the 1991 Gulf War, for example, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait punished the countries that were sympathetic to Iraq, or did not side with them, by expelling their citizens who had been working within their borders.¹⁸ When the expelled Jordanians returned to their country, unemployment in Jordan jumped from 16 percent to 25 percent.¹⁹

The right to employment and other related rights are most severely violated in countries that are more populated and poorer. Many of these countries export workers and rely on their remittances as a major source of foreign currency and as a substantial part of their national income.²⁰ These countries have large, but increasingly shrinking and impoverished agricultural sectors. Limited arable land, irrigation problems, unequal distribution of land, and lack of investments in the agricultural sector push the rural population to migrate to the cities to seek employment or better earnings.^{21,22,23,24} Failing to absorb the increasing population—due to both migration from rural areas and high birth rates—cities produce large informal economies where jobs are insecure and earnings are low.²⁵

In the formal economies of the MENA, the public sector is larger. Offering more secure and better-paying jobs with more benefits, it is also more attractive than the private sector.²⁶ Dominated by capital-intensive firms, the formal private sector offers fewer jobs. Thus, most of the unemployed are absorbed by informal economies, usually for entry-level jobs.²⁷ The informal sector also employs higher proportions of women, young, and children.²⁸ The gap between the public and private sector jobs, in terms of skill, pay, benefits and security, is observed in oil-rich countries, as well.²⁹ The public sector in Kuwait, for example, accounts for 75 percent of the GDP and 95 percent of the national labor force. Combined with a liberal migrant labor policy, this situation causes the private non-oil sector to rely heavily on less expensive and sometimes better-trained foreign workers.³⁰

The bloated public sector generates disguised unemployment, on the one hand,³¹ and serves as a form of welfare system, on the other. The economic liberalization policies, implemented

starting in the late 1970s have, however, crippled the employment and welfare function of the state.³² As a result of changes in economic and social policies, in Egypt the employment rate in the informal sector jumped from 4 percent in 1970 to 40 percent in 2000.³³

Employment opportunities for women have been relatively limited in the MENA region. Female participation in the economy and the type of jobs that women can have, however, vary from country to country and according to the class and education status of individual women within each country. As a result of a “dramatic growth in the number of women who attained higher education in the 1970s and 1980s,”³⁴ well-educated upper- or middle-class women enjoy more opportunities in the formal sector. Teaching, health care, welfare, and manufacturing industries have become relatively more open to women in most countries.³⁵

However, higher economic participation rate for women is not always caused by increased opportunities but also occurs due to increased economic hardship.³⁶ Thus, neither the wealth of the country nor the educational attainment rate for women makes a reliable predictor of the female participation in the workforce. The strength of patriarchal norms, acceptance of conservative interpretations of Islam, and their codification into the law of the country seem to be better indicators.³⁷ Although the oil economy is often linked to the marginalization of women in the labor market,³⁸ the recent data do not support that claim. According to the 2014 *Human Development Report*, female labor participation rate ranged from 13.4 percent in Syria to 50.8 percent in Qatar.³⁹ As the trend has not been always upward, the declining rates in Iraq and Syria during the last few years can be attributed to the obstacles created by the ongoing wars.

The right to livable wages/income

Following the establishment of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in October 1973, the MENA region entered an era that is referred to as the ‘oil decade,’ 1973–82. The flow of petrodollars and labor migration stimulated the economy both in oil rich and poorer countries, except for those that depended on imported oil (e.g. Turkey). The economic boom allowed the wages to increase. Wages were higher, usually by a factor of two or three, in the MENA countries compared to many countries in East Asia.⁴⁰

In the 1980s, however, “income growth in the region collapsed as a whole and turned negative for many countries,”⁴¹ and social programs have become targets for cuts.⁴² The structural adjustment policies (SAPs), imposed on Egypt, Iran, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey as conditions for desperately needed loans involved various austerity measures,⁴³ lowered wages and increased the out of pocket expenses. The neo-liberal economic paradigm, imposed by the IMF and the World Bank in the 1970s and 1980s, continued to be followed in Turkey in the subsequent decades in its effort to meet the economic conditions of European Union membership.⁴⁴ The negative impact of these ‘economic reforms’ and the steady decline in public welfare institutions was felt by “all segments of the population beyond the wealthy elite, but it has been particularly damaging for the poor.”^{45,46}

Although the agricultural sector has been neglected in favor of industry and manufacturing, the growth in these areas could not compensate for the loss in agricultural earnings. The fastest growing sector in many countries has been the service sector,⁴⁷ where the pay tends to be lower. While wage gaps within MENA countries are no higher than the gaps observed in other regions, the gaps between oil rich and other countries in the region are significant. Although the capital-intensive oil industry does not create many jobs, it pays well, especially for skilled jobs. Moreover, depending on modern services in the formal sector, capital-intensive firms stay in the formal sector. Consequently, oil rich countries not only benefit from the wealth generated from oil exports but also the large tax revenues obtained from businesses operating in the formal

sector. In other countries, where modern services and infrastructure are modest, on the other hand, private investments are attracted to the informal sector where the labor practices are more relaxed and taxes can be avoided.⁴⁸ The result is not only lower wages and violation of labor rights but also circumscribing the state's ability to tax and use tax revenues for social services.⁴⁹ Moreover, income tax rates have been relatively low, and the government reliance on indirect taxes (e.g. sale taxes), which are inherently regressive for applying the same flat rate regardless of people's income level, has been punitive for low-income people.⁵⁰

On the other hand, large capital-intensive companies enjoy a close relationship with the government and benefit from a system that can be characterized as corporate welfare. For example, in Egypt, in 2010, politically connected firms in capital-intensive industries (e.g. pharmaceuticals), received 92 percent of government loans, enjoyed 60 percent of net profits, but accounted for only 11 percent of employment.⁵¹

Inadequate earnings and poverty, both in rural and urban areas, cause another problem: child labor. While the scope of child labor in the MENA region does not reach the levels noted in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, in some countries it is not only sizeable but also directly or tacitly supported by the government. Egypt, which is estimated to have the largest child labor rate in the region, had about 1.5 million children under the age of 14 working in the 1990s. These children comprised 9 percent of the age group and 7 percent of the country's total labor force, and eight out of ten of these working children were employed in agriculture or related areas. It is noted that the Ministry of Agriculture, which owned about 10 percent of Egypt's cotton fields, not only overlooked the regulations that restrict child employment but relied upon children as young as five years old to pick cotton in the state-owned fields.⁵²

The lack of employment opportunities for and the meager earnings by adults result in a paradoxical situation in which unemployment co-exists with child labor, because child labor is not a response to labor shortage but an outcome of poverty.⁵³ Thus, not different from the global pattern, poorer countries in the MENA region tend to appear with higher rates of child labor. No matter how small, children's earnings are crucial to the survival of poor households. Yet, child labor not only violates the working children's social and economic rights but also denies them their childhood.

The right to food

A persistent problem in the MENA region is food insecurities, particularly in poor Arab-majority countries. The class biases within each country have been decisive, as well. According to a 2005 study, malnourishment among poor Egyptian children was three times higher than the wealthy ones.⁵⁴

Most countries buy food from abroad⁵⁵ and the level of dependency on imported food has increased over time.⁵⁶ Turkey is the sole cereal exporter of the region but is still dependent on imports for some food items.⁵⁷ Thus, when the world food prices rise, these countries are hit the hardest. Governments try to deal with food insecurities and avoid mass starvation by devoting a significant part of social welfare provisions to food subsidies. Although the primary goal of food subsidies is to make food affordable for the poor, inefficiencies prevent the poor from receiving in proportion to their needs. Despite the program design and delivery problems, subsidies offer considerable relief. When the staple crops doubled in price and caused the local food prices in Egypt to rise 37 percent, from 2007 to 2010,⁵⁸ the government deflated the consumer cost and made food affordable by investing 8.5 percent of the GDP in subsidies.⁵⁹

Subsidies can be explicit or implicit. Explicit subsidies use identifying cards, coupons or vouchers, while implicit subsidies adjust market prices, tariffs, and currency. States in the

MENA region use different methods. Some employ universal subsidies, which apply to the entire population. Usually universal subsidies are implicit, but some countries employ them explicitly. For example, the Iraqi government offers rations—including rice, cooking oil, flour, and milk powder—to every household as a basic safety net. Implicitly applied universal subsidy systems usually include support systems for producers, increased imports and price ceilings. While some analysts support universal subsidies for their effective delivery and avoiding stigma caused by targeted subsidies, others criticize them for inefficiencies, for being regressive and causing inequitable distribution, since the wealthy can afford to purchase larger shares of the supply and cause a shortage for the less wealthy.^{60,61,62} Until the 1990s, Tunisia implemented subsidies largely implicitly, through price controls and tariffs, but as the program grew more expensive, the country switched to programs that target poorer populations.⁶³ The Egyptian government issues subsidy coupons, in ‘green books’ or ‘red books’ that carry different statuses.⁶⁴ International lending agencies, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, pressure countries into eliminating universal subsidy systems.

Although the elimination of subsidies, without an effective alternative, would be devastating for the majority of the population in poorer countries, it is also a fact that these policies do not address the root causes of food insecurities and poverty. Moreover, subsidy programs are used for the purposes of social stability and control, rather than to fulfill people’s economic rights.⁶⁵ For example, it is argued that the former Egyptian President Mubarak implemented subsidies, along with other social programs, to promote support for his government.⁶⁶

The right to education

Modernization projects of post-independent governments involved wide-ranging social policies that included subsidized staples and public utilities, health care, pension plans for state employees, and free schooling.^{67,68} Recognizing education as an important catalyst for development, political socialization, and nation building, nationalist governments invested in the public education system considerably.⁶⁹ Thus, by the 1970s the MENA region managed to close the gap with other developing regions such as Latin America and Asia. The increased oil revenues allowed further investment in education in the 1970s, and educational expansions were particularly impressive in higher education.⁷⁰ While increased access to higher education allowed for social mobility, this was mostly achieved through government hiring, “resulting in high rates of hidden unemployment during the 1970s and 1980s.”^{71,72} The lack of employment opportunities, however, engendered a discontented educated population, which ended up being unemployed or underemployed.

Without increases in employment opportunities, education stopped serving as a mechanism of social mobility. In fact, educational systems in the region are continuously criticized for subsidizing higher education for the wealthy and neglecting primary and secondary education that would help lower classes.⁷³ Poor quality of instruction, run-down and overcrowded buildings, unhealthy and inadequate learning environments, and inadequate attention to producing students with ‘employable skills’ are also frequently cited by critics.^{74,75,76}

The educational expansion in oil rich countries has been relatively more successful than in aid-dependent countries. Governments in Qatar, UAE, and Saudi Arabia attracted some prestigious universities of the United States to establish campuses in their country. While quality education in these institutions may help students to be more employable, it is noted that many of these new universities enrolled a limited number of nationals.⁷⁷ Thus, analysts tend to agree that while education was emphasized, it was never established as a human resource towards employment.⁷⁸ We may add that it was never approached as a human right. Class, rural-urban

and gender gaps have been wide, though several countries have managed closing the gender gap for younger generations (i.e. Algeria, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and UAE).⁷⁹

The right to health and health care

All MENA countries have improved health conditions and accomplished significant reductions in infant and maternal mortality rates, and increases in life expectancy.⁸⁰ The oil boom and investments channeled to social welfare and health care allowed the region to close the gap with other developing regions in the 1970s.⁸¹ However, economic liberalization, volatile revenues, and the hardship imposed by military conflicts in several countries stalled the progress and pushed the MENA below Latin America and East Asia on health indicators.⁸² Even those countries that continue to invest in health care and show rapid increases in health spending suffer from insufficient health care systems and shortage of medical personnel.

The division between the oil rich and aid-dependent countries is most profound in regard to the health challenges that they face and solutions that they offer.⁸³ Non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and heart diseases are more common and acute in wealthy countries, while poorer countries struggle with communicable diseases. Governments in the former group managed to solve basic health care problems, at least for their nationals, by offering a higher standard of living and shifting significant funds to address health issues.⁸⁴ These countries have been consistently ranked higher on the U.N.'s human development index, which includes life expectancy at birth, along with income levels and education attainment rates.⁸⁵ Despite the increases in spending, however, they lack proper infrastructure, adequate numbers of hospitals, and educated medical personnel. Thus, they rely on migrant labor. Some of these countries also enforce mandatory medical insurance.⁸⁶

The increasing dependence on insurance companies reduces the less wealthy populations' access to health care. Much of the MENA region lacks adequate public health care systems and depends on private providers and insurance companies. Public health care systems cover only about 30–40 percent of the population in MENA; moreover, they are typically limited to citizens working in the public sector.⁸⁷ Access enabled through employment leaves out the majority of the population and practically the entire rural sector. Health care is another problem: the poor quality, long waits for the service, and old technology that characterize many public health care systems force large segments of the population to turn to private providers and insurance companies.⁸⁸

Communicable diseases continue to be a problem because preventive health care has not received enough attention, and poorer countries and rural areas lack proper sanitation, as well as access to clean water.⁸⁹ Rapid and uneven urbanization, which led to the growth of shantytowns with substandard housing,⁹⁰ aggravated the situation. Water constitutes a major problem, both in terms of quantity and quality. Since the water demand exceeds the water supply, water has been heavily subsidized in the region.⁹¹

Internally displaced people and refugees

Internally displaced people (IDP) and refugees are not only among the most vulnerable populations but they also experience many human rights violations by default. The MENA region has encountered many conflicts with varying degrees of severity. It is best known for 'the Arab-Israeli conflict,' which has had the most devastating impact on Palestinians, who became permanent refugees in their own land, as well as in several other countries in the region. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the

Near East (UNRWA), “some 5 million Palestine refugees are eligible for UNRWA services” and “Nearly one-third of the registered Palestine refugees, more than 1.5 million individuals, live in 58 recognized Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.”⁹² 241,000 Palestinians are registered in Saudi Arabia.⁹³

Other internal and international conflicts, such as recurring civil wars in Yemen, Lebanon, and Sudan, the conflict over the Western Sahara, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the repression of Kurds and the PKK insurgency in Turkey, and the three Gulf Wars,⁹⁴ uprooted many more people who became IDP or refugees. As the protest movements of the Arab Spring turned into armed conflicts in Libya and Syria, the number of the displaced in the region increased significantly. While the IDP or refugee status entails enormous hardship under the best circumstances, the massive population flows into unprepared and relatively poor countries engender living conditions and local hostilities that violate human rights and human dignity on a daily basis.

Conclusion

Although the state of economic rights in the MENA has been problematic, the region does not fare any worse than other developing regions, except in terms of unemployment. In fact, the proportion of population living in poverty tends to be lower than it is in other regions, and the income inequality levels are “relatively modest, with GINI coefficients ranging between 0.32 and 0.41” in Arab countries,⁹⁵ 0.40 in Turkey, and 0.44 in Iran.⁹⁶ Yet, it is particularly difficult to accept the poor economic rights conditions in countries that are wealthy. We may attribute the problems in those countries to mismanagement of resources and lack of political will. However, the roles of external interference, both economic and military, and the lack of cooperation among the countries within the region cannot be underestimated. Conflicts and militarization of the region absorb a good portion of the wealth, and both in rich and poor countries governments divert significant funds to arms exports and to sustain large defense forces and institutions. Instability in the region also triggers capital flight because the affluent tend to secure their wealth by banking and investing their money in other countries.

In 1992, some 20 international scholars met to discuss the economic impact of the Arab–Israeli conflict and laid out the possible economic benefits of peace and co-operation.⁹⁷ A few years later, their sentiments were reiterated by others, who addressed possible development outcomes of co-operation with a greater optimism.⁹⁸ While the continuation of conflicts addressed in those studies prevented the realization of their proposals,⁹⁹ since then the region has been drawn into further conflict and has experienced both international and civil war more widely. Thus the prospect of economic rights in the region remains grim for the majority of the population, at least in the near future.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank my assistants Nellie Binder, Abdullah Hasan, and Rubayet Lasker for their library research and preparatory work.
- 2 There is no agreed definition of the MENA region. For the purposes of this paper, it is defined to include all North African countries and the narrowly defined Middle East, which includes Turkey, Iran and Arab-majority countries. Although geographically a part of the Middle East, Israel is left out due to its rather unique position in the region. See Table 1 for the list of countries.
- 3 Alan Richards et al., *A Political Economy of the Middle East*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013).
- 4 The interdependency of rights was affirmed in outcome documents produced at the two Human Rights Conferences held by the United Nations. In addition to the Proclamation of Teheran, issued

- in 1968, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of 1993 stresses that human rights are not only universal but also “indivisible and interdependent and interrelated” and of equal importance for human dignity. See, Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, U.N. GAOR, World Conf. on Hum. Rts., 48th Sess., 22d plen. mtg., part I, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.157/24 (1993), reprinted in 32 I.L.M. 1661 (1993). For some other references on interdependency of rights at international forums, see Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat. “Human rights and democracy: expanding or contracting” in *Polity* vol. 32, no. 1 (1999): 119–144.
- 5 Right to property is excluded due to its ambiguous treatment in the Universal Declaration of Human rights and omission in the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. For a discussion of the implication of these and complications related to property rights, see Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat. “Human rights ideology and dimensions of power: the state, property, and discrimination” in *Human Rights Quarterly* vol. 30, no. 4 (2008): 906–932, especially the sections on economic dimension of power.
 - 6 It is noted that “the average Arab state derives greater aid rents than the average low-income country or than a state in sub-Saharan Africa. Over the last fifty years, the MENA region received roughly three times more net aid per capita than Latin America” (Malik 2014, 100).
 - 7 Susan Waltz, “Universal human rights: The contribution of Muslim states,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (2004): 801–844.
 - 8 Ibid.
 - 9 Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2001).
 - 10 Johannes Morsink, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Origins, Drafting, and Intent* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1999).
 - 11 Waltz, “Universal human rights.”
 - 12 Ibid.
 - 13 Richards et al., *A Political Economy of the Middle East*.
 - 14 Ibid.
 - 15 Ibid.
 - 16 Adeel Malik, “A requiem for the Arab developmental model,” *Journal of International Affairs* vol. 68, no. 1 (2014): 93–115.
 - 17 Mojca Zerovec and Marika Bontenbal, “Labor nationalization policies in Oman: implications for Omani and migrant women workers,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* vol. 20, no. 3–4 (2012): 365–387.
 - 18 Richards et al., *A Political Economy of the Middle East*.
 - 19 Hani Abu-Jabarah, “Economics of Peace: Jordan,” in *The Economics of Middle East Peace: Views from the Region*, ed. Stanley Fischer, Dani Rodrik, and Elias Tuma (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 181–199.
 - 20 Richards et al., *A Political Economy of the Middle East*.
 - 21 Ibid.
 - 22 Pierre-Richard Agenor et al., “Labor market reforms, growth, and unemployment in labor-exporting countries in the Middle East and North Africa,” *Journal of Policy Modeling* vol. 29, no. 2 (2007): 277–309.
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