

BU Research Network for MENA Studies – Launch Event Part II

10th December 1:00-4:00 pm at K103

Kimmeridge House, Talbot Campus, Bournemouth University

Register here [MENA-BU-Launch.eventbrite.co.uk](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/mena-bu-launch) or by scanning:



Contact us: [Website](#); [Email](#); [LinkedIn](#)

Programme

1.00 pm	Introduction	The MENA Team
1.10 pm	First Panel – War, Peace & Human Rights	Dr Savvas Voutyras (Chair)
	Arms Export Controls and Restrictions in the Middle East	Korhan Derin Danisma
	Modern Slavery in the MENA Region	Sila Sevinmis
	Addressing the Current Conflicts in MENA: A Call for Peace and Stability	Agbeniga Eniola Samue
2.00 pm	Break	
2.15 pm	Second Panel – Healthcare and Family Law	Dr Matthew Watkins (Chair)
	Health Risks of Child Marriage in the MENA Region	Jumoke Seriki
	Divorce Under Egypt Law; Its Contravention on Women's Rights	Lekie Courage Nwachukwu
2.45 pm	Break	
3.00 pm	Third Panel – Intellectual Property	Dr Dukki Hong (Respondent)
	Intellectual Property Law and Protection of IP Rights in MENA	Jonathan Richmond
		Olaitan Aiyeyomi
3.30 pm	Q&A with speakers + Plenary discussion	Dr Yaar Dagan (Chair)

FIRST PANEL – WAR, PEACE & HUMAN RIGHTS

DR SAVVAS VOUTYRAS (CHAIR)



Savvas Voutyras is a Lecturer in Politics at Bournemouth University, and Program Leader for MA Political Psychology. He has a background in political theory, in particular critical theory and discourse theory, and psychosocial studies. His work combines psychoanalysis and discourse theory to look at questions of nationalism, the politicisation of loss and mourning, and the politics of austerity during economic crisis. His current research focuses on recent shifts in conservative rhetoric, the construction of ‘populism’ in political and media discourse, and the discourse and politics of ‘evaluation’ and metrics in economic policy. He is a member of the editorial board of *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*. He is also a member of the international Center for the Study of Democracy, Signification and Resistance (DESIRE), based in Brussels.

ARMS EXPORT CONTROLS AND RESTRICTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

KORHAN DERIN DANISMA



This presentation examines the effectiveness of arms export controls and restrictions in the Middle East, analysing how the goal of reducing human rights violations has been overshadowed by economic and political interests. While agreements such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the EU's Common Position 2008/944/CFSP aim to protect humanitarian standards, criticism persists about the true intentions of these arrangements. The study highlights that some powers and arms-exporting organisations selectively apply these measures, using human rights as a pretext to gain strategic advantage, which is seen by some critics as neo-colonialism. The Wassenaar Agreement is a case in point; although it was created to control dual-use technologies, it undermined the human rights-oriented objective by allowing exceptions to suit the economic interests of member states. This paper argues that a more transparent model of global governance is needed, with a stronger enforcement mechanism that prioritises human rights over economic interests.

Korhan is a qualified lawyer registered with the Ankara Bar Association. He served as a director at the European Law Students' Association (ELSA) for nearly two years. He has professional experience in commercial law, corporate law, contract law, and trademark law. He is currently pursuing an LLM in International

Commercial Law at Bournemouth University. Korhan has gained experience in dispute resolution through the Dispute Adjudication Board (DAB) and is also interested in areas such as finance and sustainability.

MODERN SLAVERY IN THE MENA REGION

SILA SEVINMIS



Modern slavery persists as a critical human rights issue worldwide, with significant prevalence in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This presentation examines the complex dynamics of modern slavery within MENA, exploring factors that contribute to the exploitation of vulnerable populations, including migrant labourers, women, and children. Key drivers of modern slavery in the region include restrictive labour migration policies, armed conflicts, socio-economic inequality, and limited legal protections for foreign workers. In addition, deep-rooted cultural practices and socio-political factors contribute to forms of exploitation such as forced labour, human trafficking, and domestic servitude. Despite various international efforts and conventions aimed at eradicating modern slavery, the implementation and enforcement of anti-slavery laws in MENA countries remain insufficient.

Sila Sevinmis is a registered lawyer with the Istanbul Bar Association in Turkey. She graduated with honours from Istanbul Medipol University with a degree in law and has gained diverse legal experience through internships in corporate, contracts, and public law. Sila is currently pursuing a master's degree in International Commercial Law at Bournemouth University. Sila has engaged in leadership and volunteer roles and is a member of the European Law Student Association (ELSA).

ADDRESSING THE CURRENT CONFLICTS IN MENA: A CALL FOR PEACE AND STABILITY

AGBENIGA ENIOLA SAMUE



In 2014, in the northeastern Nigerian state of Borno, several schoolgirls were kidnapped by the Boko Haram insurgents, as widely reported. At the time, this region was plagued by insurgency, while other parts of Nigeria experienced relative peace. That same year, I was fortunate to gain university admission, a step that would eventually lead me here to Bournemouth University as a master's student and a prospective world leader in my field. Just ten years later, I stand here, pursuing my dreams.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for those innocent girls with bright futures. Some remain in captivity to this day, and those who were released returned as mothers, forced into marriages that robbed them of their dreams of becoming doctors, lawyers, or engineers. Their only crime was growing up in a place where peace had failed them, in a region where conflict dictated their future. This experience has strengthened my resolve as an advocate for peace.

Today, we see similar tragedies unfolding across MENA, and it pains me deeply to see the news coming out of Gaza, Lebanon, Israel, and other areas in conflict. When human lives are at stake, I believe it is insensitive and even dangerous to pick sides. What good is achieved when lives are lost? What happens to the millions of lives sacrificed in war once the objectives have been reached—when land is won, resources secured, and infrastructure rebuilt? What will become of those lost lives, of the families left grieving, and the lineages wiped out forever?

'We can NOT change the PAST, but we can change the present and determine the FUTURE.' Agbeniga Eniola Samuel is a BUBS faculty officer and an MSc International Management Student.

SECOND PANEL – HEALTHCARE AND FAMILY LAW

DR MATTHEW WATKINS (CHAIR)



Dr Matthew Watkins was appointed as a lecturer in Healthcare and Family Law at Bournemouth University in 2023. Prior to this Matthew was awarded a ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship in Socio-Legal Studies at Cardiff University.

Matthew has an extensive research background in both health law and bioethics. He completed his PhD in 2022, on medical decision-making in relation to informed consent. Matthew has since worked on a number of major socio-legal projects. Between 2019-2022, Matthew acted as a research assistant on the AHRC funded project, Judging Values and Participation in Mental Capacity Law (ICPR, Birkbeck), as a postdoctoral research associate on the Ser Cymru/Welsh Government Health Law in Wales Project (2021) and the BU/Leverhulme funded Legal Transplants and Policy Transfers Project: Legislating for a Devolved UK. Matthew has published widely in several top journals, both independently and collaboratively – most recently in the *Modern Law Review*, with his paper entitled “The Connection-Friction Axis in Devolved Health Policy and Law-Making in the UK: A Case-Study of Organ Donation.”.

Matthew has several years experience of teaching LLB students in core legal subjects (including Tort Law, Criminal Law, Administrative Law and Equity and Trusts), and on well-subscribed optional modules in Family Law, Healthcare Law and Legal Research Projects. Matthew is currently module Lead for LLB (Level 6) Family Law and LLM Dissertations. In 2023, Matthew became a Fellow of the Higher Education Authority. Matthew has extended his pedagogical expertise, through his work on the IAA ESRC funded project: “HEAL: Health Law and Ethics for Post-Primary Students in Wales’ Project” where he worked with the Welsh Government, Cardiff City Council, and local schools, to create backwards designed training and resources for the new curriculum for Wales.

Matthew is the Chair and co-founder of the Law Research Network at Bournemouth, which was recently awarded Seed Funding for a new Summer Public Lecture Series, entitled: “Everyday Law and Ethics.” Matthew sits on the REF Committee, and the Revalidation Committee within the Law School.

HEALTH RISKS OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN MENA

JUMOKE SERIKI



One of the pressing issues in parts of the MENA region is child marriage, especially among young girls. Despite ongoing reform efforts and international attention, child marriage continues to pose severe challenges to public health, education, and economic growth. For these young girls, early marriage often means early pregnancy, limited educational attainment, and, as a result, reduced lifelong opportunities. The health risks are numerous—early childbearing increases the likelihood of complications in pregnancy and childbirth, which is particularly dangerous for adolescents. Psychologically, these young brides may face isolation, limited social mobility, and a lack of agency, which can further contribute to cycles of poverty and reduced health outcomes.

Tackling child marriage requires a multi-dimensional approach. This issue is deeply rooted in cultural practices, economic pressures, and social norms that vary from one region to another. Many families see early marriage as a path to economic stability or as a way to preserve family honour. However, our work as a research network is to highlight how and why these practices continue to exist, examine their impacts, and suggest ways to shift societal norms toward healthier, more empowering outcomes for girls. This requires a balance of respect for cultural contexts with a commitment to fundamental human rights.

Our interdisciplinary approach uniquely positions us to address child marriage and similar challenges from various angles. Together, we can explore the root causes—whether economic hardship, political instability, displacement due to conflict, or lack of educational access—and develop solutions that are both sensitive to cultural contexts and grounded in evidence-based research. By collaborating across disciplines, we can create a more holistic understanding of these issues and develop policy recommendations that are realistic, compassionate, and effective.

Jumoke Seriki serves as SUBU's Public Health Officer for the Department of Health and Social Sciences, and is an MSc candidate in Public Health.

DIVORCE UNDER EGYPT LAWITS: CONTRAVENTION ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

LEKIE COURAGE NWACHUKWU



The laws of Egypt as it concerns divorce speaks volume of slavery, inequality and a contravention on the rights of Egyptian women. On the one hand, the Law permits a woman to be married without her consent and often times, even before she becomes an adult, the effect of which may likely be incompatibility, hence, the desire for a divorce which on the other hand takes the woman through a complex, burdensome, time-consuming and costly process, unlike the men that get divorce so easily just by the word of mouth. The hardship occasioned on Egyptian women seeking marriage dissolution is not anywhere close to ending as the nation state, even though has domesticated a key treaty like CEDAW, yet made a reservation on Art. 16 which borders on Equality in marriage and family.

Lekie Courage Nwachukwu is a qualified Nigerian Lawyer with Ten years post call cum practice experience and is registered with The Nigerian Bar Association.

She is social security and safety trained and obtained a Certificate and a Diploma in Family Protection from The Institute of Student Affairs Management, Nigeria in 2020 and 2021 respectively. She obtained her Master's in Public International Law in Nigeria in the year 2021. She is currently pursuing her second Master's in International Commercial Law , in Bournemouth University, England. She is also a Student Member of The Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CI Arb).

Lekie has a burning desire for the emancipation and protection of the girl child all over the world, especially in the African and Middle East region and will be presenting her research on:

THIRD PANEL – INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

DR DUKKI HONG (RESPONDENT)



Dr Hong is Lecturer in Law and a member of the Centre for Intellectual Property Policy and Management (CIPPM). He joined Bournemouth University in 2023.

Before joining Bournemouth University, he obtained his doctorate degree (Bournemouth University, UK), LL.M (University College London, UK), and BA Law (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, South Korea).

Dukki's primary research area is copyright law and emerging technologies in the creative and entertainment industries. He researches and teaches various subjects in this area, including video game laws, deepfakes, and copyright aspects of Korean pop culture development (known as K-culture or Hallyu). Currently, he is interested in exploring the copyright implications of video game cloning and copyright policies around the exploitation of User-Generated Content (UGC) relating to video games.

Dukki obtained a PhD in intellectual property law at Bournemouth University. More specifically, he conducted research on copyright and design rights implications of 3D printing and product design under the supervision of Prof Dinusha Mendis and Dr Tania Humphries-smith.

Dukki participated in various externally funded projects as a research assistant to Prof. Dinusha Mendis. These encompass, for example, a 4-year research project funded by the European Union Intellectual Property Office on the key enforcement judgments relating to intellectual property rights in 14 EU Member States. More recently, he participated as a Post-doctoral research assistant in a research project funded by IFLA/KnowledgeRights21 on open norms and copyright in seven jurisdictions.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW AND PROTECTION OF IP RIGHTS IN MENA

JONATHAN RICHMOND AND OLAITAN AIYEYOMI



“Legislation on IP protection has been rapidly developing and being updated in the GCC countries in recent years,” as noted by Morgan Lewis. This proposal examines the legal parameters and protection of intellectual property in the MENA region, focusing on the Sultanate of Oman and the Middle East in particular. It highlights challenges in Oman’s civil law-based judicial system, which could face increasing pressure from the rapid growth of intellectual property in the region. Mechanisms have been progressively developed and implemented to align IP protection with the expectations of the international community. While these efforts have facilitated the prioritization of local cases, they do not resolve the ambiguity surrounding how local courts should approach IP-related cases, nor do they establish a specialized court to address these matters.

Jonathan Richmond (LLM Candidate, Intellectual Property Law) is a returning Bournemouth University Alumni having graduated this November and is currently enrolled on the master's course. As an Omani national, he has a keen interest in Oman’s development and welfare, particularly in its evolving role within the international community; including their approach and accession to international treaties and organizations.

Olaitan Pius Aiyeyomi (LLM Candidate, Intellectual Property Law) is a Nigerian lawyer and a public affairs analyst. He is a dedicated legal professional with expertise in legal research, writing, and policy analysis. With nearly two years of experience spanning legal practice, administrative roles, and strategic volunteering, he is passionate about enhancing operational efficiency and client satisfaction in legal practice. Olaitan is also keen on ensuring the rights of creators are protected, trademark laws are enforced, and a balanced IP framework is developed.

Q&A WITH SPEAKERS + PLENARY DISCUSSION

DR YAAR DAGAN (CHAIR)



Dr Yaar Dagan is Programme Leader for LLB Law (Student Experience & Engagement), Lecturer in International Law, and a researcher at Bournemouth University, the Department of Humanities & Law, Faculty of Media & Communication.

Yaar is the Co-Director of the BU Research Network for MENA Studies. He is a member of the BU Law Research Network (LRN) and the Centre for the Study of Conflict, Emotion and Social Justice. He currently serves as an external supervisor at the Institute of Asian and African Studies of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, and serves as a visiting lecturer at Lviv Polytechnic University, Ukraine.

Dr Dagan previously served as a visiting researcher at the Centre for Applied Philosophy, Politics, and Ethics (CAPPE) at the University of Brighton and at the Sussex Centre for Human Rights Research, University of Sussex, as well as the European University Institute (Italy), the University of Iceland, and was part of Erasmus+ teaching mobility programme for Higher Education researchers.

Yaar holds his PhD from Keele University, School of Law, as well as an LLM (2012) and LLB (2010) from the Haim Striks School of Law, the College of Management Academic Studies. His thesis, 'Drones, Settler Colonialism, and the Law', explores the nexus between drone violence and international law. Before moving to the UK, he was a lecturer overseas, including the Academic Center for Law and Science (2015-2017), and the Haim Striks School of Law.

Dr Dagan won academic prizes, scholarships, and awards for his research activities, including winning first place at the 'Keele 3-min Thesis Competition Grand Finals' and first place at 'Disrupting Disciplines: Sharing Objectives, ILAS Postgraduate Conference' 3-min thesis finals. In 2019, he was shortlisted as one of the 12 national semi-finalists for the Vitae Three Minute Thesis competition UK finals. Earlier that year, Yaar won the Erasmus+ Teaching Mobility Award from the British Council and Ecorys UK for teaching at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Iceland.

PHOTOS OF MENA LAUNCH EVENT PART I

26 NOVEMBER AT KG01

Dr Mona Seyed Esfahani – Introduction – What is MENA?



Photos above by Nam Mario and Thanh Hung Nguyen

Dr Yaar Dagan - Upcoming Monograph: 'Drones, Settler Colonialism and International Law: How Israel Became a Drone Superpower' (Routledge, 2025)



Photo above by Nam Mario and Thanh Hung Nguyen

Hadil Kekhya and Oluwasijibomi Fola Akande - Why is no-one talking about Sudan?



Photos above by Nam Mario and Thanh Hung Nguyen

Dr Max Mauro - The MENA media discourse



Photo above by Nam Mario and Thanh Hung Nguyen

Rayeesa Mahomed - The International Family Tracing Service of the British Red Cross



Ayşe Kayra Özdemir - Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa



Dr Payam Ansari & Zahra Termeh Eskandari - “Resistance and Protest” and/or “Negotiation and Joy”: The Journey of Iranian Women in Men’s Football Fandom



Photos above by Dr Yaar Dagan

Balpreet Kour - Empowering Ethnic Minorities and Women Entrepreneurs in MENA: Unlocking Innovation in a Changing Economic Landscape



Q&A with speakers and plenary discussion







Photos above by Nam Mario and Thanh Hung Nguyen



Photos above by Dr Yaar Dagan