

Dear Madam/ Sir,

We would like to invite you to the seminar

Middle Eastern Perspectives on the Revolutions

This seminar will take place on April 18 in The Doelenzaal at the University Library at Singel 425 in Amsterdam.

The Arab uprisings have surprised and stunned almost everyone in the world, including the revolutionaries themselves. The conventional wisdom until January 14th - the day of the fall of Ben Ali - both in the region and beyond - was that Arab autocrats are 'here to stay' and the region is doomed to be governed by authoritarian regimes. Yet 'missions impossible' have turned out to be possible: the power of the people ousted dictators Ben Ali and Mubarak. Despite current crackdown on popular protests in Yemen, Bahrain, Iran, Syria, Iraqi Kurdistan and military setbacks in Libya, the struggle for dignity and democracy is far from over. In fact, it appears that these revolutions are just the beginning of transformative changes that are sweeping the entire region.

To get first hand perspectives and insights from insiders about their revolutions, Hivos, University of Amsterdam and IKV Pax Christi are organizing a this seminar. The overall objective is twofold: to provide a platform for regional activists to meet, share and exchange experiences and knowledge, as well as to inform Dutch policy makers, civil society, media and public opinion on these historic changes. What happened during the days prior to the protests in Tunis, what was the role of the labor union, how can activists fight repressive reactions and what is next? Distinctive revolutionaries and activists will provide their perspectives and views on these transformative social and political changes.

This seminar is organized within the framework of the Knowledge Programme Civil Society in West Asia which aims to get insights on state-society relations and civic engagement in Iran and Syria in particular and Middle East in general (www.hivos.net).

Due to limited space participation is only possible after registration. Please email Annabel Meurs at a.m.meurs@uva.nl not later than April 15 about your participation and clearly indicate if you would like participate the whole day or only the morning or afternoon part.

Sincerely yours,

Kawa Hassan, Hivos
Jan Jaap van Oosterzee, IKV Pax Christi
Juliette Verhoeven, University of Amsterdam