



CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE ARAB SPRING
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Born in Damascus, Syria in 1934 and educated at the American University of Beirut; B.A. in Philosophy 1957. Continued graduate studies in Modern European Philosophy at Yale University, Ph.D. 1961. Taught philosophy at Yale, Hunter College in New York City, the American University of Beirut, and Damascus University. Presently, Emeritus Professor of the History of Modern European Philosophy at Damascus University and often Visiting Professor of Contemporary Arab Social and Political Thought at various universities around the world: Princeton; Hamburg; Leipzig; Antwerp; Humboldt University Berlin; Central European University, Budapest; Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan. Fellow at the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, DC. Doctor Honoris Causa, Hamburg University; Erasmus Prize, the Netherlands; Leopold Lucas Prize, Tübingen University. Published, both in Arabic and English, on modern European philosophy and intervened, through books, articles, and pamphlets, in the major social, political, religious, and ideological debates raging in the Arab world since the early sixties to the present. Human rights and civil society activist. Recent Publication: *Secularism, Fundamentalism, and the Struggle for the Meaning of Islam. Collected Essays in 3 Volumes* (2013). – Address: Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1737 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA. E-mail: salazm@wcfia.harvard.edu

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Wissenschaftskolleg for offering me a Fellowship during 2012–13, at a time of great political upheavals and social turbulence in key Arab countries including my own, Syria, and my adopted country, Lebanon.

Coming to Wiko, my intention was to use this golden opportunity to catch up with myself in terms of completing much work and lots of drafts left unfinished from earlier moments. My hope was to review the English translation of my book *Critique of Religious Thought*, to be published soon by Al-Saqi Books in London. Also, to finish the study I had started earlier on the “Occidentalism” question in light of the grand international debate triggered by Edward Said’s book *Orientalism*, a debate that extended over the last quarter of the 20th century.

I must confess that the highly troubled situation in the Middle East and the revolution and repression in Syria continued to preoccupy my mind at Wiko and strongly distracted me from my other pursuits.

My essay “The Arab Spring and the Return of Islam” was delivered as the opening lecture of the EUME series at Wiko. This essay will soon appear as a chapter in a book on the “Arab Spring and Syria”, to be published in London, edited by Professor Fawaz Gerges of the London School of Economics. I finished a paper in Arabic on “The Arab Spring and Political Islam” and another paper in English on “Civil Society and the Arab Spring”. Also, I managed to finish an article for the journal *Turkish Studies* (Howard University), on “Turkey, Secularism and the EU: A View from Damascus”.

Wiko care and attention provided me the leisure to lecture in Germany and other European countries, to give interviews to the media, to appear on television and radio programs (both Arab and European), and to take part in conferences, panel discussions, and local political rallies. I succeeded in initiating political contacts and discussions with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, the Berg-hof Foundation, and the Körber-Stiftung, all deeply interested in the goings-on in the Arab world and the Middle East in general. This, in addition to direct political activities for the Syrian opposition in Berlin, Cairo, Doha, and Paris.

Given all that, I still managed to make reasonable progress on my original Wiko projects. I am half way through reviewing and editing the English translation of my book, hoping to complete the job by the end of the year. My work on the “Occidentalism” study resulted in a substantial paper on “Translation, Arabic, and the Postmodern”, presented at Wiko’s weekly colloquium last April. Another happy byproduct was the agreement with Gerlach Press in Berlin to bring out my collected essays in English in three volumes.

The experience of living and working at the Wissenschaftskolleg for a whole year is truly inimitable, given the very enriching exchanges, interactions, and debates with and among such a variety of creative persons, experts, top scholars, admirable Fellows, and

friendly colleagues, all hailing from so many diverse disciplines, countries, and cultures. For this, I will remain thankful to the end of my life.

Finally, I would like to express my great appreciation of the care and attention received from the high quality staff at Wiko, always patient, dedicated, and punctual.