



**University of
Zurich^{UZH}**

Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies – Islamic Studies

Meet the Scholar:

**Talk & Workshop
With Prof. Dr. Nora Derbal**

“Saudi Arabia in Transition”



April 04, 2025, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm

Rämistrasse 59, CH-8001 Zürich (RAA-E-27)

Talk & Workshop

With: Prof. Dr. Nora Derbal (University of Hamburg / Germany)

Abstract:

Perhaps no country in the Arab world has undergone a more startling transition during the last decades than Saudi Arabia – from a “closed Kingdom” to a fancy tourist destination. However, the long-term impact of these transformations for Saudi citizens and society are yet to be assessed. This event is divided into two parts. First (11:00-12:00), Prof. Nora Derbal will give a talk on what it means to conduct field research on Saudi Arabian civil society in a “season of change”. During the second, more interactive part (12:00-2:00 p.m.), we will have a closer look at recent transformations in the field of Saudi cultural heritage.

Bio:

Nora Derbal is professor of Islamic Studies specializing on Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula based at the Asia Africa Institute at the University of Hamburg. Before moving to Hamburg, she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Martin Buber Society of Fellows in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2020–2025), a postdoctoral teaching fellow at the American University in Cairo (2018-2020), and a research associate for the Orient-Institut Beirut (2015-2016). She studied Islamic Studies, Modern Middle East Studies and History in Berlin, Oxford and Jeddah, and graduated in 2017 with a PhD in Islamic Studies from Freie Universität in Berlin. Her latest monograph, *Charity in Saudi Arabia: Civil Society under Authoritarianism*, has been published in 2022 with Cambridge University Press.

For the *workshop* (noontime – 2 pm) please register in advance via email at rebecca.sauer@aoi.uzh.ch, subject line «workshop with Nora» no later than **April 01**.
For the input talk starting at 11:00 a.m., no prior registration is necessary.