

Title of my burning passion: “Can dignity become a constitutional right?”

Leader/Host: Z (pronounced “Zee” and short for Zaynab El Bernoussi)

Abstract:

Human dignity is deemed a source of human rights in most constitutions, even the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, and in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which is a fundamental text for the existence of the United Nations and often considered customary international law. At times of political turmoil, fundamental human rights are often at stake; the popular uprisings that have shaken the Arab world since the late 2010, known as the “Arab Spring,” are a prime example of political turmoil. In Tunisia, the Arab Spring upheaval in which the contested President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled the country was even coined “Dignity Revolution” to emphasize the popular demands for dignity in hopes for a new constitution and political regime. One of those changes in the case of Tunisia concerns the constitutional process that led to the adoption of the current 2014 Tunisian Constitution. This case is useful in our dignilogue as the new constitution enshrined the demand for dignity quite notably. There are of course other constitutional texts that we can bring to our discussion (Germany, Israel, etc.). The core focus here will be to think about: 1) how dignity can become a constitutional right; 2) what would it take to enshrine dignity in the constitution (transnational intervention or grassroots movements, for instance); 3) Are there any “side-effects” that we can expect.

Box of ideas: economic rights, refugee rights, criminalizing bullying and other forms of “moral” and verbal abuse, criminalizing corruption...etc.

Useful scholarship: Aharon Barack (constitutional law), Sarah Chayes (kleptocracies), Eric Bleich (racism), Michèle Lamont et al. (recognition gap), me, Z. El Bernoussi (postcolonial politics of dignity), etc.

My plan is to start by kindly asking everyone to introduce themselves (including myself) to get to know all contributors and the host who leads the dignilogue.

Contributors, bumblebees and butterflies are very welcome!

Through dialogue, I hope we can harvest a deeper understanding of the implication of more tangibly constitutionalizing dignity.