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Interesting Times: Returning to Blended Activism in a Culture of Impunity

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Interesting Times: Returning to Blended Activism in a Culture of Impunity

This presentation deals with the three phases of Creative Commons based OER-activism in Lebanon during the last two decades. It documents the attempts made by activists to use online platforms in the field of oil and natural gas (ONG) and the human rights (HR) violations linked to the resource curse that often accompany it. It will show how the 'interesting times' signified by war, pandemic, state failure and revolution in the MENA can be confronted with a combination of online and community based face-to-face activism.

The contours of struggle against the pervasive culture of impunity in the Middle East was highlighted by the gradual collapse of the Lebanese state in the months prior to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic in February 2020. This went hand-in-hand with the beginning of offshore drilling in March of that year. The author will focus on the introduction of OER and other online education platforms as a format for university led youth activism from the early 2000's to the present. Examples will be presented to illustrate how these online foundations facilitated the transition from blended activism to online awareness raising and mobilization linked to Lebanon's gradual slide into increased HR violations since the outbreak of its revolutionary uprising ('thawra') in 2019. Finally, the steps that are currently being developed to transition back to blended approaches to activism as of the summer of 2021 will be presented.

This will demonstrate how OER helps activists, educators and students to promote rule of law and a restoration of the commons in teaching, community organizing, and collaborative research and development. Focus will be on the systemic corruption and human rights violations in the ONG sector, but also related to HR and the culture of impunity elsewhere.

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