

ROUNDTABLE

Multilingual Literature in Conflict Zones

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*Hela Ho!: A multilanguage,  
multivoiced uprising against “all of them”*

To outsiders, Lebanon is often known as a “conflict zone” par excellence. Its civil war/s, for example from 1975 to 1990, history of occupation by both the IOF and Syrian army throughout the same period until today, and role as a theatre on which a range of regional and global battles are played out mean that it is often viewed as volatile, fractured, and conflict-prone. To insiders, Lebanon prides itself on its multilingualism. In addition to its cuisine, temperate climate, and beautiful scenery, the ability to speak and mix many languages is a crucial part of Lebanese national identity.

This intervention will analyze a series of demonstration chants and slogans that were articulated in multiple languages in the October 17 uprising against the government in 2019. The period of what became known as the *thawra* was a wide-spread, cross community, multi-gender uprising that encompassed a wide range of Lebanese society united to rid the government of corruption. One of the main slogans chanted was “killun ya3ni killun” (‘all of them means all of them’) indicating that it was a challenge to the entire political class, not to only certain or particular figures within it, as has been the case in previous protest movements.

Several chants and slogans will be discussed alongside other expressions of the *thawra* in relation to both their poetics and their messages. It will look at the interplay of languages (Arabic, English, and French) in specific examples and this worked to express political discontent in the *thawra* moment.