

2025 Section Annual Report: Part 1 for Global Middle East and North Africa

Introduction

Annual reports are used by the Sections Committee to assess the health of a Section, measure the Section's vitality, and identify processes, programs, or initiatives that could serve as a model for other Sections. In addition, they serve to provide institutional memory, socialize new Section leaders, and promote transparency to Section members.

This annual report covers the period of Section activity from September 2024 to August 2025 and a fiscal year from January 2025 to December 2025. This report is shared publicly.

Section Governance

Provide details of your Section's governance activity during the period between September 2024 and August 2025.

Business Meeting

Copy and paste below (or attach separately) the agenda and draft/approved meeting minutes from the Section business meeting which include a count of members present and summary of decisions made at this meeting. Minutes are not a transcript of proceedings, but a listing of what discussions took place and official actions taken.

The minutes of the Business Meeting are attached.

Council Meeting

Copy and paste below (or attach separately) the agenda and draft/approved meeting minutes of all council meetings. Minutes must include a list of council members present and a summary of decisions made. Minutes are not a transcript of proceedings, but a listing of what discussions took place and official actions taken.

The minutes of the Acting Council meeting are attached.

Awards

Provide a list of Section awards and awardees conferred in the past year.

Not applicable for a Section-in-Formation.

2025 Finances

Provide a narrative on how the 2025 budget matched with actual expenses and income from 2024. Please account for any substantive differences.

Not applicable for a Section-in-Formation

The Previous Year

Describe Section activities during the period between September 2024 and August 2025.

Provide an overview of the Section's communications with its members and include explanation of how your communication strategy meets the goals and values of the Section. Include links to the section website, newsletters, and any other electronic media used.

After approval as the Section-in-Formation in April 2025, Global MENA distributed periodic messages to its members about upcoming online events relevant to Global MENA themes and about recruiting new members. Beginning in August 2025, the Acting Chair inaugurated a monthly announcements e-mail with information about upcoming events at the ASA Annual Meeting, deadlines and online events relevant to Global MENA themes, and recent publications by the Section-in-Formation's members.

Since the Section's bylaws have not yet been ratified by the members, there is no established statement of the Section's goals and values. The bylaws include a Communications Committee that is intended to take on these activities.

Describe the Section's diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. What steps were taken this year to achieve those goals?

Since the Section's bylaws have not yet been ratified by the members, the Section has no established goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

However, the organizers of the Section-in-Formation took numerous steps to recruit members representing the diverse constituencies within Global MENA's three overlapping but distinct communities: scholars studying the MENA region, scholars studying MENA diasporas, and scholars studying Islamicate communities around the world.

These steps included contacting ASA members whose addresses in the ASA Members Directory were in Global MENA countries; contacting ASA members whose papers in the program of the 2025 ASA Annual Meeting touched on Global MENA themes; advertising the Section through the listservs of other ASA Sections; and offering free Section membership coupons to graduate students, paid for by a group of anonymous donors.

Provide an overview of the section's programming at the annual meeting and include explanation of how this programming meets the goals and values of the section (e.g. intellectual exchange, professional networking, mentoring, inclusion).

As a Section-in-Formation, Global MENA was eligible only to hold a Business Meeting and to participate in the Section and Community Open House.

The Business Meeting included a celebration of Global MENA's new status as a Section-in-Formation; an update on membership numbers, targets, and deadlines to be considered for promotion to regular Section status; reflections on the state of Global MENA by two senior scholars; questions and proposals from Section members; and an opportunity for Section members to meet one another (see the attached Business Meeting minutes).

The Acting Chair and several Global MENA members attended the Open House to recruit new Section members.

Provide an overview of the Section's programmatic activities outside of the Annual Meeting (e.g. webinars, networking events, mentoring initiatives, resources for dissemination) and include explanation of this programming meets the goals and values of the Section.

The Section-in-Formation undertook no programmatic activities outside of the Annual Meeting from its formation in April 2025 through August 2025.

Section-in-Formation on the Global Middle East and North Africa

American Sociological Association

Business Meeting, August 10, 2025

Minutes

The inaugural business meeting of the ASA's Section-in-Formation on the Global Middle East and North Africa (Global MENA) met at 10:00-11:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 10, 2025, at the Hyatt Regency Chicago Hotel during the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association.

There were 58 people in attendance. Of the Global MENA acting Council members, only acting chair Charles Kurzman was able to attend. Two acting Council members were unable to attend because of the United States's current travel ban.

The meeting began with a review of the Section-in-Formation's mission statement, which was drawn up by the Bylaws Committee that met during the summer:

The Global Middle East and North Africa (Global MENA) Section is a network of scholars with a regional component and a global component. The regional component refers to the study of all peoples of the Middle East, West Asia, and North Africa, while the global component refers to the study of peoples of Middle Eastern, West Asian, and North African descent, in addition to global Islamicate communities both within and outside of the Middle East, West Asia, and North Africa. The Section also aims to be a welcoming space for critical scholarship and for scholars confronting threats to academic freedom.

The acting chair asked people in attendance to stand if they belonged to each of the three communities of scholars who collectively make up the Global MENA. Most identified themselves as specialists on the MENA region, however they might define it. Some identified as specialists on MENA diasporas, and a smaller number identified as specialists on Islamicate communities outside of the MENA region.

The acting chair then offered a salute to colleagues who were not able to attend because of the travel ban, or because of state repression and violence, or because of economic inequality and financial need, or because of illness or personal obligations.

The meeting then reviewed the steps taken to reach this point of meeting as a Section-in-Formation:

Winter 2024: A self-nominated organizing committee drafted the proposal to the ASA and recruited signatories.

Seda Baykal
Andy Clarno
Sam Dinger
Müge Göçek
Reyhaneh Javadi
Ayşe Perihan Kırkıç
Charles Kurzman
Gökhan Mülayım
Tristan Leperlier
Rima Majed
Şevin Sağnıç
Zakia Salime
Rita Stephan
Jonathan Wyrzten

Spring 2024: More than 200 signatories endorsed the petition to the ASA.

Spring 2025: The ASA approved the Section-in-Formation.

Summer 2025: The acting Council was elected.

Anaheed Al-Hardan (acting at-large Council member)
Maryam Alemzadeh (acting at-large Council member)
Reyhaneh Javadi (acting student Council member)
Charles Kurzman (acting chair)
Rima Majed (acting secretary-treasurer)
Sadiah Saeed (acting at-large Council member)

Summer 2025: A self-nominated Bylaws Committee met to draft the Section's bylaws.

Anaheed Al-Hardan
Ryan Calder
Müge Göçek
Rebecca Karam
Hadi Khoshnevis
Charles Kurzman
Sadiah Saeed
Danial Vahabli
Melissa Weiner

Participants then reviewed and discussed the draft bylaws, which will go to the Section-in-Formation's members for ratification this fall. Important elements of the bylaws include:

Council membership: Chair, Chair-Elect, Immediate Past Chair, Secretary-Treasurer, six at-large members, three student members. This Council is larger than most ASA Sections, perhaps all of them, in order to represent the three communities of scholars who comprise Global MENA's constituency.

Council committees: Program Committee, Communications Committee, Awards Committee, Mentorship Committee. All but the Awards Committee will be constituted this year – ASA rules do not permit awards until two years after a Section is formed. Global MENA members were encouraged to nominate themselves for these committees; in future years, there will be a more established process for nomination and selection of committee members.

The acting chair then previewed the Section-in-Formation's upcoming activities, including:

August 2025: Recruit of members in order to reach 200 members by August 31, 2025, in order to become eligible for regular Section status. (At the time of the meeting, the Section-in-Formation had about 160 members.) If it does not reach 200 members by this deadline, the Section-in-Formation would need to start over with recruiting members next year, with a deadline of August 31, 2026. If the Section-in-Formation does not reach 200 members in 2026, the Section-in-Formation status lapses and we would need to start over with a new petition for Section-in-Formation status.

Fall 2025: The Section-in-Formation's membership will vote on bylaws.

Fall 2025/Spring 2026: Possible virtual programs; monthly announcements via Section-in-Formation's listserv. Members were encouraged to submit announcements, including recent publications and upcoming virtual events, to the Section-in-Formation's chair, for now, until the Communications Committee is set up.

Summer 2026: Possible mentoring event; another fun-filled business meeting; no panels, roundtables, or reception because of ASA rules.

Summer 2027: If approved as a full Section in 2026, Global MENA will be allowed to organize panel(s) and roundtables and co-sponsor a reception at the ASA's 2027 Annual Meeting, along with another fun-filled business meeting.

The meeting then heard remarks from two accomplished colleagues who have been instrumental in the establishment of the Section-in-Formation:

Professor Louise Cainkar, Marquette University

Professor Fatma Müge Göçek, University of Michigan

Both speakers referred to the intellectual and political challenges facing sociologists who study Global MENA issues, and the benefits of institutional space within the ASA for conversation and mutual support.

At this point, and throughout the meeting, members introduced items of new business, including:

A proposal to form an Ad Hoc Action Committee to address challenges facing Global MENA members.

A proposal that the Council continue to press for increased accessibility to the ASA Annual Meeting, including hybrid sessions for ASA members who are unable to attend in person, especially those who are barred from attending by the new travel ban.

A proposal to create a directory of scholars and institutions working on Global MENA issues.

A proposal to create additional online resources that may be use to Global MENA members.

A proposal to offer online workshops on methodological and other issues of interest to Global MENA members.

The acting chair offered to bring these issues to the attention of the Council at its next meeting.

Sprinkled throughout the meeting, the acting chair conducted a photo quiz, featuring twelve historic photographs related to the Global MENA. Members were asked to identify where each photo was taken. Prizes were awarded to the two winners, who each correctly identified six of the twelve locations: Saba Madani and Katrina Wang.

The meeting was accompanied by a soundtrack featuring iconic artists and songs related to the Global MENA. The playlist was posted for public access at:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3DF09847iH7r0jtQgmwvqc>

The final 20 minutes of the meeting were devoted to social and intellectual cross-fertilization.

Minutes taken by acting chair Charles Kurzman, in the absence of the Secretary/Treasurer.