

Dear Colleagues and Students,

You are kindly invited to the seminar entitled “ ‘Are We Not Human Beings!?’ ‘Are We not Ottomans!?’: Popular Consciousness on Human Rights in the late Ottoman Empire.” organised by the Department of History.

Date: 08 May 2024, Wednesday

Time: 16.30

Avenue: AZ-31 HIST Seminar Room

Title: ‘Are We Not Human Beings!?’ ‘Are We not Ottomans!?’: Popular Consciousness on Human Rights in the late Ottoman Empire.

Speaker: Dr. İbrahim Halil Kalkan

Abstract:

Why don't we have a history of human rights in the Ottoman Empire? It is curious that human rights have almost entirely been ignored in late Ottoman historiography. As my talk will argue, ideas of human dignity, humanity and equality significantly informed public opinion and played a critical role in shaping Ottoman politics. One way of exploring the history of human rights within the Ottoman Empire is to track the abolition of torture over the course of the Tanzimat. The abolition of torture—in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere around the world—was conceptually grounded in the notion of human dignity. Using a number of petitions from the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918), I will suggest that the framework of human rights would give scholars a new framework to examine late Ottoman history. Recorded in these petitions from ordinary Ottomans hailing from diverse walks of life are political testimonies against torture, often stressing their dignity not only as Ottoman citizens but as humans. By reading closely between the lines, these petitions exhibit such concepts as individual rights, equality and the rule of law.

Bio:

Dr. İbrahim Halil Kalkan received his PhD in History & Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at NYU. His studies focus on Ottoman social, legal and cultural history. His dissertation titled, ‘Torture, Law and Politics in the late Ottoman Empire, 1840-1918’ examines the abolition of torture especially to explore the radical transformation as embodied in the Tanzimat with respect to political philosophy. He is currently working on a book project titled, ‘The Abolition of Torture in the Late Ottoman Empire: Justice, the Body & Modernity’. The book expands the framing of his dissertation by adding a global context and investigating the history of human rights within the Ottoman Empire.