

**The Center for Arab & Middle Eastern Studies
The Minor in Transitional Justice
American University of Beirut**

Cordially invite you a hybrid talk

**Exploring the wounds:
How trauma shapes radicalized identities**

With

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Discussant

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**Friday 12 September | 11:00-12:30 PM
Asfari Institute Conference Hall - Level 1
American University of Beirut**

Abstract: The presentation explores how trauma shapes individual pathways into terrorism/political violence, focusing on Salafist Jihadism in Lebanon and, Bosnia and Hercegovina. Drawing on literature, expert insights, and life history interviews with former fighters in Lebanon, it applies Abrutyn's theory of social pain and social trauma to examine how long-term suffering - such as poverty, exclusion, and the legacy of war - creates deep psychological and social vulnerabilities. Lebanon (especially Tripoli) and certain areas of Bosnia are conceptualized as sites of chronic affective disequilibrium, where unresolved trauma - manifesting in disrupted attachments, complex PTSD, and moral injury fracture identity and increases susceptibility to ideological recruitment. Radicalized identities are constructed through grievance narratives that frame violence as both meaningful and necessary. The engagement in violence is further enabled by weak state presence, ideological saturation, and local recruitment networks, while protective factors remain scarce. Disengagement, often prompted by incarceration and disillusionment, rarely leads to reintegration, as many return to environments marked by social pain. The analysis underscores the importance of integrating trauma perspectives into terrorism research and highlights the need for holistic interventions that address both psychological wounds and structural exclusion.

Janja Mikulan graduated from the School of Advanced Social Studies (Nova Gorica- Slovenia). Her primary research work is in the field of radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism and (collective) trauma, and she also deals with broader global security issues and the challenges of globalisation. In her research, she applies a combination of different research methods, with special emphasis on case studies and qualitative (comparative) research plans. She is project coordinator of projects "The EU as a global actor in a fragmented and traumatised world – EU-GlobalAct" (2023 – 2026; Jean Monnet Module funded by the EU) and the basic postdoctoral project "Trauma perspective on vulnerability to radicalization" (2023-2025; ARIS).

Open to the public

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