



Max Planck Institute for
Comparative and International
Private Law | Hamburg

AFTERNOON TALKS ON ISLAMIC LAW

Esther van Eijk

Maastricht University

"All in the family:
Muslim and Christian family law practices in Syria"

Tuesday, 8 March 2016 – 4 pm

Conference Room 1, 1st floor

All employees and guests of the institute as well as
other interested parties are cordially invited to the lecture.

Nadjma Yassari

About the Speaker:

Esther van Eijk is a postdoctoral researcher working on projects on marriage, divorce and religion at Maastricht University, the Netherlands. She has completed degrees in International Law and Arabic at Leiden University (the Netherlands), specializing in human rights, refugee & gender issues, and Islamic family law. Her PhD thesis on Family Law in Syria (Leiden University) is based on extensive, ethnographic fieldwork in Damascus (Syria), consisting of interviews and court observations in three (Muslim and Christian) personal status courts. After her PhD, she moved as a postdoctoral researcher to Maastricht University, where she expanded her research activities towards religious marriage and divorce practices, and women's rights issues in the Netherlands.

About the Topic:

Family relations in Syria are governed by a plurality of religious-based personal status laws and courts. The various religious communities – Muslim, Christian, Druze, and Jewish – have the right to regulate matters of personal status, including marriage, maintenance, dissolution of marriage, child custody, and inheritance, according to their respective religious laws. This plurality of laws and courts has engendered a complex system of parallel, and sometimes competing, jurisdictions which are divided along communal lines.

Drawing on material from her PhD fieldwork in Damascus, Esther van Eijk will discuss differences and similarities between shar'iyya, Catholic and Greek-Orthodox personal status courts in terms of legal practices and court procedures. Furthermore, whilst the plurality of Syrian family law is clear, she will argue that – irrespective of the religious affiliation – it is nevertheless characterized by the prevalence of shared cultural or patriarchal views and norms on marital relations, family and gender.