Abstract

Focusing on the embroilment of the singer Asala in the Syrian revolution, and her emergence as the leading anti-Assad celebrity in the Arab world, this paper analyzes the politics of celebrity in revolutionary times. Considering the confrontation between Asala and Assad as a clash between a celebrity and a dictatorial body, the paper grapples with the mix of gender, politics, and identity driving the controversy against the backdrop of a bloody civil war, via the following questions: What happens when a celebrity’s popular/commercial capital is reinvested in a political crisis? To what extent can the social capital of celebrity be “transferred” to revolutionary politics? What happens if we were to focus on the political dimensions of celebrity in a revolutionary context that offers sharp contrasts with the liberal democracies where celebrity-politics relations have been traditionally articulated? What role does the Internet, specifically digital video on YouTube, play in this process?