



THE TURBULENT WORLD OF MIDDLE EAST SOCCER

JAMES M. DORSEY

James M. Dorsey introduces the reader to the world of Middle Eastern and North African football — an arena where struggles for political control, protest and resistance, self-respect and gender rights are played out. Politics was the midwife of soccer in the region, with many clubs being formed as pro- or anti-colonial platforms and engines of national identity and social justice. This book uncovers the seldom-told story of a game that evokes deep-seated passions.

Football fans are shown to be a major political force and one of the largest civic groups in Egypt after the Muslim Brotherhood: their demands for transparency, social justice, and an end to corruption sparked vicious street battles that left scores dead and thousands wounded. Discontent in Algeria erupts regularly at matches where fans demand the ouster of

military leaders. A folk-song crooning national goalkeeper leads protests in Homs, Syria's third largest city and scene of some of the worst violence perpetrated by Bashar al-Assad's regime. In a country that bans physical education for girls, Saudi women have established clandestine football clubs and leagues. The book further tells the story of Somali child soldiers turned soccer stars and Iranian women who dress as men to smuggle themselves into stadiums to watch matches.

'A rare combination of scholar and journalist, James Dorsey offers us a fresh lens through which to look at contemporary events in the Middle East and North Africa. Insightful, provocative, and fun to read, this is a welcome addition to the meagre scholarship on sports and politics in this region.'

— Raanan Rein, Tel Aviv University, author of *Fútbol, Jews, and the Making of Argentina*

'This might well be the single most important and informative book on the Arab Spring yet written. A must read for anyone who wants to understand the deeper social and cultural processes underlying the uprisings and counter-revolutionary processes that have shaken the region the last five years.'

— Mark Levine, Professor of History at the University of California, Irvine

'Dorsey masterfully conveys the complex machinations of politics and culture through his analyses of the words and actions of real people expressing their passions about their lives through the medium of "the kicking sport." Sports fans and political junkies will greatly enjoy and learn from this fascinating book.'

— Louis W. Goodman, School of International Service, American University

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