



The New Era of Peacemaking: What's Next for Arab Mediation?

A Workshop on Building Synergies for the Future



September 30 - October 1, 2025



Agenda



Middle East Council on Global Affairs, Majlis, Doha, Qatar



Middle East Council on Global Affairs in Partnership with
CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation

Background

As traditional peace-making structures face unprecedented challenges, new approaches are urgently required. Regional leadership from the Arab World has become more critical than ever for both regional and global stability.

This workshop convenes to harness that momentum and chart a collaborative path forward. Our goal is to explore how regional efforts can complement the global peace-making system and help fill its most critical gaps. Together, participants will address two central questions:

- What are the most urgent challenges to peace and mediation today?
- How are Arab states rising to meet them?

Expected outcomes

- Clarify the diverse mediation approaches of Arab states and identify key synergies.
- Define the region's evolving role within the global peacemaking architecture.
- Generate concrete ideas for impactful cooperation at both regional and cross-regional levels, and co-author a publication on the topic.



Agenda

Day 1 – Tuesday, 30 September 2025

9:00 – 9:30	<p>Setting the Stage: Our Shared Mission</p> <p>The session will outline the objectives of the workshop and include participant introductions to foster connections.</p> <p><i>Dalia Ghanem, Program Director and Senior Fellow, Middle East Council on Global Affairs</i> <i>Maruan El-Krekshi, Head of Middle East and North Africa, CMI – Martti Ahtissari Peace Foundation</i></p>
9:30 – 11:00	<p>Session 1: Foundations & Traditions – The DNA of Arab Mediation</p> <p>This session offers reflections on the Arab mediation experience, highlighting its distinct characteristics and connections to the geopolitical context of past efforts.</p> <p>Guiding Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping the Evolution: How has Arab mediation evolved over the past decade? Can distinct styles be identified? • Bridging with Global Norms: How do Arab approaches align with UN principles and guidelines? • Strengthening the Network: What mechanisms currently exist for exchange, learning, and coordination among Arab mediators? <p>Moderator: Dalia Ghanem, Program Director and Senior Fellow, Middle East Council on Global Affairs</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Khalid Al-Khulaifi, Special Advisor, Office of the Special Envoy to the Foreign Minister, Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i> <i>Yousuf Al-Bulushi, Chairman, Muscat Policy Council</i> <i>Yasameen Al-Nadheri, Independent Consultant</i> <i>Khaled Okasha, General Director, Nawat for Consultancy, Support, and Peacebuilding</i></p>
11:00 – 11:15	<p>Coffee Break</p>
11:15 – 12:45	<p>Session 2: Mediating in a Fractured World – The Rising Role of Arab States</p> <p>This session situates Arab mediation in the shifting international landscape: weakening multilateralism, multipolarity, rising violent conflict, regional connectivity, and the emergence of unilateralism.</p> <p>Guiding Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ‘Why Now?’: What explains the recent surge in Arab mediation efforts? • Redefining Roles: In this new era, what is the role of the UN and how can Arab states reinforce and complement a more functional global system? • Rejuvenating Institutions: What is the potential for the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) play in strengthening multilateral mediation? <p>Moderator: Saana Keskitalo, Senior Manager at CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation</p>



12:45 – 13:45	Lunch
13:45 – 15:15	Session 3: From Theory to Practice – Building a Cooperative Toolkit This session explores mediation by multiple stakeholders, the intersection between mediation and foreign policy, and pathways to more cooperative approaches. Guiding Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overcoming Barriers: Given the sensitivities and competition for influence, what scope exists for greater cooperation in mediation?• Creating a Playbook: Can and should Arab mediation experiences and traditions be consolidated into a collective effort? How can this be developed to foster greater cooperation?• Building Resilience: How can mediation efforts contribute to wider regional resilience? Moderator: Ahmed Morsy, <i>Visiting Fellow, Middle East Council on Global Affairs</i>
15:15 – 15:45	Day 1 Synthesis – Key Insights & Emerging Themes A facilitated discussion consolidating the day's most critical takeaways. Moderator: Oskari Eronen, <i>Chief Programme Officer, CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation</i>
19:30	Dinner Nesrine Restaurant



Agenda

Wednesday, 1 October 2025

9:30 – 11:00	<p>Session 4: Anticipating the Future – Peacemaking in the Next Decade</p> <p>This session looks ahead to emerging conflict trends and their implications for Arab mediators.</p> <p>Guiding Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forecasting Conflict Trends: What are the key emerging trends in regional and beyond? How is peacemaking pursued and who are the main actors? • The Future of Mediator Dynamics: How will the balance of competition and cooperation among Arab states evolve in the mediation space? <p>Moderator: Younes Abouyoub, <i>Chief of the Governance and State-Building Division for the MENA region, United Nations</i></p>
11:00 – 11:15	<p>Coffee Break</p>
11:15 – 12:45	<p>Session 5: Workshop Finale Turning Dialogue into Action: Commitments and Next Steps</p> <p>This session focuses on designing practical and achievable frameworks for future collaboration. It will summarize the workshop's conclusions, define clear next steps, and secure commitments for ongoing cooperation.</p> <p>Guiding Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying Avenues: What are the most viable opportunities for collaboration (i.e., lessons-learned, capacity building, joint analysis)? • Designing Realistic Mechanisms: Which of these ideas are most achievable? What specific mechanisms, platforms, or initiatives can we propose? <p>Moderators: Dalia Ghanem, <i>Program Director and Senior Fellow, Middle East Council on Global Affairs</i> Saana Keskitalo, <i>Senior Manager at CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation</i></p>
12:45 – 13:45	<p>Lunch</p>



List of Participants

- Ahmed Morsy, *Visiting Fellow, Middle East Council on Global Affairs*
- Alma Jadallah, *Senior Specialist, Dispute Resolution, Compliance Advisor Ombudsman*
- Amine Ghali, *Director, Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center*
- Charlotta Sparre, *Deputy Director, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*
- Dalia Ghanem, *Program Director and Senior Fellow, Middle East Council on Global Affairs*
- Ghassen El-Kahlout, *Director, Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies*
- Hesham Youssef, *Senior Advisor, European Institute of Peace*
- Ibrahim Fraihat, *Associate Professor, Doha Institute for Graduate Studies*
- Ismail Chergui, *Former African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security*
- Khaled Okasha, *General Director, Nawat for Consultancy, Support, and Peacebuilding*
- Khalid Al Khulaifi, *Special Advisor, Office of the Special Envoy to the Foreign Minister, Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs*
- Maged Al Madhaji, *Chairperson and Co-Founder, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies*
- Maruan El-Krekshi, *Head of Middle East and North Africa, CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation*
- Mouin Shreim, *Former Deputy Head of Mission at the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen*
- Nassif Hitti, *Lebanese Diplomat and Senior Advisor to the Regional and International Affairs Cluster at Issam Fares Institute*
- Nureldin Satti, *Sudanese Diplomat and Former Deputy SRSG Burundi*
- Oskari Eronen, *Chief Programme Officer, CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation*
- Ozge Genc, *Visiting Fellow, Middle East Council on Global Affairs*
- Qublan Hurr, *Senior Policy Advisor at CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation*
- Saana Keskitalo, *Senior Manager at CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation*
- Saifaldin Z. Al-Darraji, *Advisor, Iraq National Security Advisory*
- Sultan Al-Khulaifi, *Senior Researcher, Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies*
- Yasameen Al-Nadheri, *Independent Consultant*
- Younes Abouyoub, *Chief of the Governance and State-Building Division for the MENA region, United Nations*
- Yousuf Al Balushi, *Chairman, Muscat Policy Council*
- Zahra' Langhi, *Senior Advisor to the UN Special Envoy for Yemen*
- Zozan Alloush, *Independent Consultant*



Participant Biographies

Ahmed Morsy is a Visiting Fellow at Middle East Council on Global Affairs and an associate senior researcher in the MENA program at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). He was previously a senior analyst at Eurasia Group and manager of MENA Project at the American Political Science Association (APSA). Morsy is the co-founder of the Arab Political Science Network (APSN). His research focuses on the geopolitics, security, and political reform in the Middle East.

Alma Jadallah is a Senior Specialist in dispute resolution at the Office of Compliance Advisory Ombudsman (CAO) and a part-time faculty at George Mason University. She previously served as president and managing director of Kommon Denominator, a firm that assesses and delivers interventions on conflict prevention and social well-being. She has worked globally in crisis and post-conflict settings, serving as an independent and impartial mediator, facilitator, advisor, and designer of dispute resolution processes. Her work focuses on conflict prevention and mitigation, process design, and international negotiations.

Amine Ghali is the Director of Kawakibi Democracy Transition Center (KADEM). He was previously appointed as a member of the National Commission to Investigate Corruption following the Tunisian revolution. He also previously held number of positions in international and regional NGOs. His work focuses on democracy and reform in the Arab region, particularly on the democratic transition in Tunisia.

Charlotta Sparre is the Deputy Director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Previously she has served as Director of the Swedish Diplomatic Training Programme, as Ambassador of Sweden to Egypt, and to Jordan, and as Counsellor at the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU. During the last decades, Sparre has been an active participant in several track two mediation processes and academic meetings on the Middle East, with a special focus on regional security, democracy and gender equality.

Dalia Ghanem is Director of the Conflict and Security program and Senior Fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs. She was previously director of the MENA program and senior analyst at the European Union Institute for Security Studies. Prior to her tenure at EUISS, Ghanem was a senior resident scholar at the Carnegie Middle East Center. Her research focuses on Middle Eastern and North African politics, including issues of political violence, radicalization, civil-military relations, and gender studies.

Ghassen El-Kahlout is Director of the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies and Associate Professor in Conflict Management and Humanitarian Action at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. Previously, he worked with the United Nations, the International Federation of Red Crescent Societies, Islamic Relief Worldwide, and served as Director of the Humanitarian Forum in the UK. His research focuses on humanitarian response, post-war recovery, and capacity building in conflict-affected contexts.

Hesham Youssef is a Senior Advisor at the European Institute of Peace (EIP). Previously, he was a Senior Fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace, Assistant Secretary-General at the OIC, and a senior official at the Arab League. Earlier in his career, he served in the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with postings in Canada and Geneva. His work focuses on conflict resolution in the Middle East, particularly the Arab Israeli conflict, Iraqi reconciliation, Sudan, and humanitarian issues across the Islamic world.

Ibrahim Fraihat is Associate Professor of International Conflict Resolution at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and a non-resident fellow at Deakin University's Middle East Studies Forum. He previously served as Senior Foreign Policy Fellow at the Brookings Institution and taught at Georgetown and George Washington Universities. His research focuses on conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction in the Arab world, with emphasis on mediation, transitions, reconciliation, dialogue, and institutional reform.

Ismail Chergui is a Former Algerian Diplomat who served as African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security. He was previously Algeria's Ambassador to Russia and Special Ambassador to Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti, where he helped draft the 2000 Algiers Agreement. Earlier in his career, he held posts at Algeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including President of the Cabinet of the Minister, and at the Algerian Embassy in Morocco. His work focuses on peace and security in Africa, conflict mediation, and diplomacy.

Khaled Okasha is the General Director of Nawat for Consultancy, Support, and Peacebuilding, where he also serves as Head of the Regional Security and Risk Analysis Group. He is the former General Director of the Egyptian Center for Thought and Strategic Studies and previously held senior roles at the Egyptian Police Academy, including as a faculty member at the College of Training and Development and the Graduate Studies College. Okasha has also served as a member of Egypt's Supreme Council for Combating Terrorism and Extremism, and as a visiting professor at Cairo University, Al-Azhar University, and South Valley University. His research interests focus on counterterrorism, violent extremism, security strategy, and regional conflict dynamics.



Khalid Al-Khulaifi is a Qatari Diplomat and Academic Specializing in international relations, with a focus on small states and power dynamics. He currently serves in the Office of the Special Envoy to the Foreign Minister and as a senior expert at the Centre for International Policy Research (CIPR). Previously, he lectured at Qatar University and held various roles at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His research explores the strategic role of small states and the use of smart power in global politics.

Maged Al Madhaji is the Chairperson and Co-Founder of Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies. Previously he served as the Center's Executive Director. He was previously appointed to the Preparatory Committee for Yemen's Conference of National Dialogue. His research and publications focus on Yemen's conflict and politics and is a prominent political and human rights activist.

Maruan El-Krekshi is Head of CMI's Middle East and North Africa Programme after serving as a Senior Programme Manager. Previously, he worked with UNDP in Yemen on governance, elections, and human rights, and held roles with the World Food Programme, UNHCR, and UNDP in Libya. His work focuses on governance, civil society, and development in the MENA region.

Muin Shreim is the former Deputy Head of Mission at the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen (2017-2023). He previously served as Director of Political Affairs at the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Director of Political Affairs at UNMISS in Sudan, and Special Political Advisor with the UN-AU mediation team for Darfur. Earlier in his career, he was Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs in the West Bank. His expertise spans peacebuilding, mediation, and conflict resolution in Yemen, Libya, Sudan, Palestine, and Darfur.

Nassif Hitti is Senior Advisor to the Regional and International Affairs Cluster at Issam Fares Institute (IFI). He previously served as Lebanon's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, Ambassador Head of Mission of the League of Arab States (LAS) to Italy and the Holy See, LAS Permanent Observer to UN bodies in Rome, and LAS Ambassador to France and UNESCO. He was also advisor and spokesperson to the LAS Secretary General and taught International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies at USEK. His expertise covers international relations, diplomacy, and foreign policy.

Nureldin Satti is a Sudanese Diplomat and Retired UN Senior official. He served as Principal Deputy and Acting SRSR in the UN missions to Burundi, contributing to the implementation of the Arusha Accord and Burundi's 2005 elections. Previously, he was Sudan's Ambassador to the United States, France, Portugal, Switzerland, and the Vatican, and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO. He has extensive experience in mediation, peacekeeping, and conflict resolution across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. His research and publications focus on Sudanese identity, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding.

Oskari Eronen is Chief Programme Officer of CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation. He has previously led CMI's Asia Programme and Policy & Learning activities and the Programme Management Office, responsible for development of effective methodologies for mediation, including planning, monitoring, evaluation. He previously worked at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs as Adviser for Security and Development as well as in several research positions related to international peace and security, with a focus on civil-military affairs.

Özge Genç is a Visiting Fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs. Previously, she was the research director at the Center for Public Policy and Democracy Studies (PODEM). Prior to that position, she was the director of the democratization program at the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV). She also served as a senior expert on democratic governance at the UNDP and as a senior specialist at the Education Above All Foundation (EAA) in Qatar. Genç's research areas include political and institutional reform and peace and conflict resolution.

Qublan Hurr is a Senior Policy Advisor at CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, focusing on MENA issues including Palestine, Iraq, and water diplomacy. He previously served for nearly 24 years with the Jordanian government, including as Deputy Ambassador in Baghdad. His expertise includes political analysis, mediation and dialogue, policy planning, capacity building, and multilateral diplomacy.

Saana Keskitalo is a Senior Manager at CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation. She has 14 years of experience in dialogue, mediation, and capacity building, managing conflict prevention and resolution processes in Libya, Iraq, and Palestine. Currently, she leads CMI's work on the evolving peace mediation field and engagement with mediation actors across its regional programmes. Her expertise lies in designing and managing informal processes that support local conflict resolution and peaceful transitions.

Saifaldin Z. Al-Darraj is currently an Advisor at Iraq's National Security Advisory and serves as Member and Rapporteur of the Security Sector Reform Committee under the Prime Minister's Office and National Security Council. Previously, he was Head of Political Affairs and Counter-Terrorism at the Iraqi Embassy in the UK and a diplomat in the Disarmament Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His expertise covers security sector reform, counter-terrorism, and international security.

Sultan Al-Khulaifi is a Senior Researcher at the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies, where he focuses on issues of conflict mediation and resolution. He holds a PhD in Politics from the University of Glasgow. Al-Khulaifi's research primarily examines Qatari foreign policy, with a particular emphasis on its role in conflict mediation and peacebuilding. His work seeks to deepen understanding of Qatar's diplomatic strategies and its contributions to resolving regional and international disputes.



Yasameen Al-Nadheri is Yemeni Political and Strategic Advisor currently contributing to international initiatives on maritime security in the Red Sea. She previously served as Senior Political Advisor to the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Yemen (2022–2025), co-founded and led the Peace Track Initiative, and supported the UN Special Envoy to Yemen (OSESGY) through the U.S.-funded Yemen Rapid Response program. She has also worked with Integrity UK, GIZ, Médecins du Monde, and NDI. Her work focuses on mediation and peacebuilding, Yemeni and regional politics, security sector reform, and maritime security cooperation.

Younes Abouyoub is Chief of the Governance and State-Building Division for the MENA region at the United Nations. He previously served as Director of the political offices of the UN Special Envoys to Yemen and Burundi, and as Senior Political Officer with UNSMIL and the UN Security Council Panel of Experts on Sudan. He has also worked with the UN Department of Political Affairs in New York and the UN Environment Programme in Nairobi. His interests include conflict resolution, peacebuilding, governance, and state institutions.

Yousuf Al-Balushi is the Chairman of the Muscat Policy Council and is actively engaged with various international think tanks. He previously served as a Faculty Lecturer at the Modern College of Business and Science. His interests include regional security and GCC international relations, with a focus on Yemen, Iraq, Iran, and Oman's developmental strategies, foreign policy, and geopolitical significance.

Zahra' Langhi is Senior Advisor to the UN Special Envoy for Yemen (OSESGY). She previously co-founded and served as CEO of the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace and has worked with UN Women, UNDP, ESCWA, OHCHR, and the League of Arab States on women, peace, and security initiatives. She is also North Africa Focal Point for GAMAAC and a member of the AU Advisory Board on Women, Peace, and Security. Her interests include peacebuilding, mediation, women's rights, PVE, reconciliation, and constitutional processes in the MENA region.

Zozan Alloush is an Independent Consultant, Gender Equality Activist, Social Entrepreneur, and Peace Mediator. She is a Member of the Women's Advisory Board (WAB) to the UN Special Envoy for Syria, where she also served as Chair in 2023, and has previously led de-radicalization, counterterrorism, and early recovery programs in conflict-affected areas. Her interests include conflict prevention, peacebuilding, women's empowerment, de-radicalization, and climate adaptation in the MENA region.

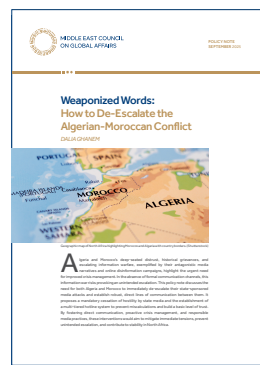


Relevant Publications



Beyond Mediation: Rethinking Peacebuilding in a Transnational Middle East

Issue Brief



Weaponized Words: How to De-Escalate the Algerian-Moroccan Conflict

Policy Note



Lessons Learned on Palestinian Unity in the Midst of the Gaza War



Track II Diplomacy: How Can It Be More Effective?

Issue Brief



The Long Journey of Sudanese Women: From the margins of politics to influential roles



Turkish-Kurdish Peace Talks Must Navigate Domestic Politics and Regional Shifts



How Acting as Mediator Expands Qatar's Geopolitical Reach



The Importance of Diplomacy: How Qatari Mediation is Impacting Gaza

