

# MOSAIC

Middle East Initiative Annual Report 2024 | Harvard Kennedy School



HARVARD Kennedy School  
**BELFER CENTER**  
MIDDLE EAST INITIATIVE



**The world, and the University I have had the privilege to call home for the better part of two decades, changed utterly on October 7th, 2023.** When Hamas terrorists stormed into Southern Israel and unleashed an orgy of violence that claimed the lives of a thousand innocent Israelis, they did not just ignite a regional war that has in turn visited death upon tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians and reconfigured the entire Middle East, they also ignited on our campus a season of division, recrimination, and soul-searching whose final disposition feels as unknowable as it is distant.

That events in a faraway corner of the world should so shake a 400-year-old New England establishment might seem surprising, but it should not be. Though Harvard began its life as a small religious seminary and was for most of its existence a finishing school for the New England, and then American, elite; the Harvard of the 21st century is a profoundly global undertaking. About a quarter of our undergraduates, and more than half of the Kennedy School’s student body, come from overseas. It is therefore natural that among our number would be those whose lives have been changed irretrievably by the fighting that now engulfs the Middle East. As is evident to anyone who has spent even a little time on our campus, there are those at Harvard who are in as much pain as their loved ones in Israel, Palestine, and elsewhere in the region. And, as one might expect, the pain they feel is not confined to them, but is rather conducted like an electric charge throughout this (sometimes surprisingly) close-knit campus. The dueling student protests, the competing demands for expressions of sympathy and solidarity from the university’s leadership, the anguished conversations in hallways, classrooms, and in on-line chat groups, all speak to a community that, though divided, is united in pain.

As unpleasant as pain is, it is essential to our survival. Its function is to alert us to danger and to focus our minds on avoiding or removing the source of it. Anyone who has ever suffered acute pain knows how well it performs its task: Your field of vision narrows, everyday cares and concerns vanish, big words and complex sentences give way to grunts and cries, and the entirety of one’s being is trained on the singular goal of stopping whatever it is that is causing the hurt. The fact that others might also be hurting is irrelevant—only your agony is real, and it must be addressed now. What that means in a plural community like the Harvard of the 21st century, in the midst of an

ongoing cataclysm like the one consuming the Middle East, is that members of our Harvard family are not only hurting badly, but they are hurting so badly that they cannot see or fathom the pain of others in our Harvard family who are also hurting just as badly.

There are two ways of dealing with pain—you can numb it, or you can root out the cause. The former provides immediate relief, but leaves unaddressed the underlying pathology. The latter promises a cure, but cures (like chemotherapy or surgery) often make pain worse before making it better. And, at the risk of pushing this metaphor farther than it will go, it’s my belief that a university cannot be in the business of numbing.

Thus, instead of avoiding the painful topic of October 7th and its aftermath, our responsibility is to confront it head-on, to create opportunities for our community to learn about what happened, and to seek out ideas for how peace, dignity, and justice can be brought to peoples long bereft of them. This requires us to hear from (and engage fearlessly with) a range of competing, even mutually hostile, perspectives. To understand the many catastrophes that bedevil the Jews and Arabs who dwell between the river and the sea, we must hear from those who believe that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is correct when he says that Israel has no choice but to subject Gaza to punishing airstrikes until the terrorists of Hamas relinquish both the innocents they have taken hostage and their own iron grip on power; and we must also hear from those who believe that the cause of the horrors of October 7th is Israel’s 60-year occupation of Palestinian land and what they see as the subjection of Palestinians to a grim security regime that strips them of their dignity, and who charge Netanyahu’s government now with unspeakable crimes against the people of Gaza. Our respectful engagement with these views does not imply our endorsement of them, but rather reflects our conviction that we cannot learn about the conflict—nor do our part to end the cycle of pain that has circumscribed the lives of generations of Arabs and Jews—if we close our ears to the voices of those who are embroiled in it.

In the pages that follow, you will see evidence of our attempt to fulfill our mission—from a university-wide Forum we convened a mere six days after the October 7th terrorist attacks, to the Middle East Dialogues, an ambitious series of searching, one-on-one conversations with important thinkers and policymakers with varied perspectives on the

conflict. Though many of these conversations have been difficult, and we have endured our fair share of opprobrium for “platforming” this or that perspective, the overwhelming reaction of our community to these efforts has demonstrated, to me at least, that what marks a son or daughter of Harvard is a remarkable capacity to think, to reason, and to listen even in the midst of incredible pain. Someone who knows Harvard only through sensational news reports and viral social media posts would be surprised to learn that our events have been attended by hundreds of students, all of whom faced our speakers—Israeli and Palestinian, left and right—with respect, civility, and curiosity. Though the period since October 7th has been one of the most difficult in Harvard’s history, it is impossible for me not to feel optimistic about our future, driven mainly by what I learned in the course of this year about the intelligence, level-headedness, and profound humanity of the vast majority of those who are fortunate enough to claim membership in this earnest, ancient institution on the banks of the Charles River.

All of this talk of pain and healing reminds me of one of the things that binds all of the Abrahamic traditions—the imperative to make this world better than we found it. Jews are encouraged to be agents of “tikkun ha-olam.” Christians are exhorted to be a “light unto the world.” And my fellow Muslims are urged to dedicate themselves to “islah al-ard.” Though we at the Middle East Initiative are under no illusions regarding the possible magnitude of our own impact, the imperative to make the world better nonetheless drives the work of our entire team, from associate director Julia Martin, to program coordinators Paige Ferreira and Marina Lorenzini, to senior fellows Edward P. Djerejian (former US ambassador to Israel and Syria) and Youssef Chahed (former prime minister of the Republic of Tunisia), to the many fellows and research assistants with whom we are proud to work with. Though we pray that the coming year will be one of peace, recovery, and renewal, we remain ready to do our part to help our community confront that which tears our world (and us) apart, in the hope that they will be the ones to repair it.



**Tarek Masoud**  
Faculty Chair,  
Middle East Initiative



**Welcoming  
Meghan  
O’Sullivan  
as New Belfer  
Center Director**

In July 2023, the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs welcomed Professor Meghan O’Sullivan, Jeane Kirkpatrick Professor of the Practice of International Affairs, as its new Director. A distinguished expert on the geopolitics of energy and global affairs, and an award-winning author, Professor O’Sullivan brings to the role a deep

commitment to public service, having held several senior policymaking positions, including Special Assistant to President George W. Bush, Deputy National Security Advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan, and Vice Chair of the All-Party Talks in Northern Ireland. She has advised national security leaders in both Republican and Democratic administrations and most recently served on Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s Foreign

Affairs Policy Board. Succeeding the late Secretary Ash Carter and Co-Director Eric Rosenbach, Professor O’Sullivan is building on the Kennedy School’s legacy of visionary leadership. In her first year, she has led the Belfer Center’s world-class faculty, staff, and students in addressing some of the world’s most pressing challenges.

**MOSAIC**  
**Middle East Initiative  
Annual Report 2024**

**MEI TEAM**  
**Tarek Masoud,**  
Faculty Chair  
  
**Julia Martin,**  
Associate Director  
  
**Paige Ferreira,**  
Program and  
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**Marina Lorenzini,**  
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**Joshua Jessiman,**  
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**ON THE COVER**  
**Al Jazeera Al Hamra,**  
Ras Al Khaimah, 2024  
By Paige Ferreira,  
Middle East Initiative



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# Celebrating 10 Years of the Emirates Leadership Initiative





**Launched in 2014, the Emirates Leadership Initiative (ELI) is a collaboration between the Harvard Kennedy School’s Center for Public Leadership, the Middle East Initiative, and Executive Education, made possible through the generous support of the Department of Government Enablement —Abu Dhabi Government.**

Leveraging the complementary expertise and offerings of each partner, ELI is designed to build capacity in the United Arab Emirates and the broader region, advance scholarship and identify evidence-based solutions to public policy challenges, and facilitate the exchanges of ideas, expertise, and know-how between the Harvard Kennedy School and educational and policy-oriented institutions in the United Arab Emirates and the region.

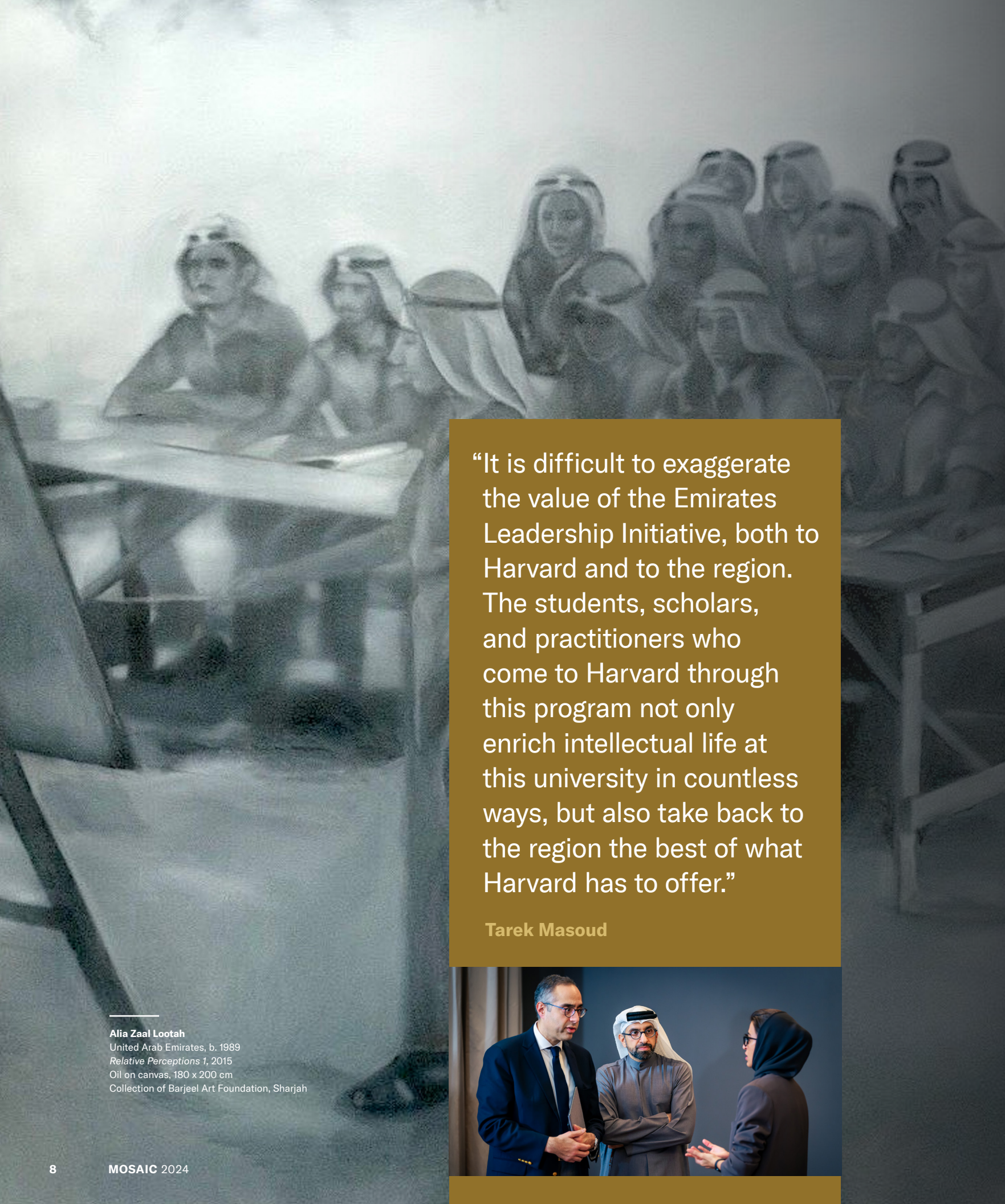
**Reem Al Ghaith**  
United Arab Emirates, b. 1985  
*Partition*, undated, mixed media on canvas mounted on wood, 211 x 201 x 2 cm  
Collection of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah

## By the Numbers

- 10 Years
- 72 Student Degree Fellows
- 56 Research Fellows
- 14 Senior Fellows & Visiting Scholars
- 8 Senior Fellow-led study groups
- 23 Faculty research projects
- 143 students supported through ELI student research and internships fund
- 9 custom Executive Education programs serving 334 participants
- 25 Fellowships to attend HKS programs
- 2 for-credit courses in United Arab Emirates during the January term serving
- 31 students over 2 Years
- 5 United Arab Emirates policy field experience trips (not for credit) serving
- 127 participants over 5 Years







“It is difficult to exaggerate the value of the Emirates Leadership Initiative, both to Harvard and to the region. The students, scholars, and practitioners who come to Harvard through this program not only enrich intellectual life at this university in countless ways, but also take back to the region the best of what Harvard has to offer.”

**Tarek Masoud**

**Alia Zaal Lootah**  
United Arab Emirates, b. 1989  
*Relative Perceptions 1*, 2015  
Oil on canvas, 180 x 200 cm  
Collection of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah



## Graduate Student Fellowship Program

The Emirates Leadership Initiative has awarded 72 Graduate Student Fellowships to date, helping to prepare the next generation of leaders from the United Arab Emirates and the Arab world to drive positive change. The support provided by this fellowship lowers financial barriers for talented students, hones students' research skills at the Kennedy School, and enables the School to enroll the best and brightest emerging leaders to address the most pressing challenges of society in the decades to come. The ELI student fellows participate in a robust year-long leadership development program at the Kennedy School's Center for Public Leadership. The Program provides a highly personalized and rigorous learning experience that emphasizes self-directed inquiry, experiential learning, critical reflection, and bespoke mentorship—equipping participants with the requisite skills and insights to lead with impact in the public arena. For more on the 2022-23 and 2023-24 ELI graduate student fellows, see pages 44-45.

## Research Program

### Research Fellows:

The Emirates Leadership Initiative offers one-year Research Fellowships for projects addressing the most pressing public policy challenges in the UAE, Arab world, and broader Middle East. Since its inception, the Fellowship has been awarded to 56 outstanding doctoral candidates, postdoctoral researchers, and early-career faculty. Hosted at the Middle East Initiative, each fellowship includes a competitive stipend, tailored academic mentorship, and structured opportunities for Fellows to develop and workshop new ideas. The program is designed to cultivate the next generation of policy-oriented scholars dedicated to advancing impactful solutions across the region. For more on the ELI Research Fellows, see page 26.







## Senior Fellows:

The ELI Senior Fellows Program brings distinguished and well-established policy professionals and practitioners from the United Arab Emirates and other Arab countries to the Kennedy School to engage with students and faculty through public events, guest lectures, and participation in academic seminars. In addition to advancing their own research and writing, many of our senior fellows lead study groups at HKS—not-for-credit academic seminars for Harvard students—on topics related to their areas of expertise. To date, ELI has appointed 14 senior fellows and visiting scholars who have led eight study groups with a combined reach of hundreds of students. Study group topics have included economic development, social policy, foreign policy, great power competition in the Gulf, and others. These groups play a vital role in augmenting the Kennedy School’s curricular offerings, enabling students to engage more deeply with the Arab world and to develop a nuanced understanding of its complex policy challenges and opportunities. For more on MEI’s cohort of Senior Fellows, see page 20.

## Faculty Research:

The ELI Faculty Research Grants catalyze policy-relevant research by Harvard faculty on issues of critical importance to the United Arab Emirates, GCC, and Arab world. To date, ELI has awarded 23 grants to faculty from six schools across Harvard. This opportunity incentivizes MENA-based research and collaborations with local scholars and institutions, which have included IRENA and Globesight. Several faculty have presented their research in the MENA region, including three projects presented at Masdar. The project findings contribute to a growing body of policy-relevant research on a variety of topics, with a focus on: improving governance; building peace; revitalizing social service delivery; broadening financial and labor markets; technology and governance; and mitigating environmental challenges, such as water security and climate change. For more on recent faculty research, see page 24.

## Student Research and Internships:

The ELI Student Research and Internships Fund provides opportunities for Harvard graduate students to deeply engage with pressing policy issues in the region through research, internships, and study, and it has supported more than 140 students to date. This fund not only helps to build capacity and prepare the next generation of policy leaders from the Middle East, but also incentivizes future leaders from other regions to explore policy opportunities and challenges in the Arab world. Student awardees have produced policy briefs and recommendations for leading institutions—including the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, Office of the Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, and the World Bank. The projects supported through this fund contribute to a growing body of policy-relevant research, which informs public policy in the region.

## Executive Education:

HKS has provided tailored training for 334 United Arab Emirates government leaders since the first ELI Executive Education Program in 2015, most recently titled “Leading for Public Value in a Digital Age.” In each of the nine annual courses, leaders came together to augment their skills in areas such as strategic management, negotiation, adaptive leadership, digital government, impact evaluation, principled public leadership, and more. To date, 22 Harvard faculty members have taught in this course. Participants gained new ways of approaching their roles as leaders as well as acquiring new tools to manage their organizations more effectively and efficiently. On completion, these senior leaders joined a growing community of leaders in government who understand a specific methodological approach and share a customized set of skills. This robust network facilitates collaboration and support as leaders navigate new challenges.

“My PhD dissertation work would not have been possible without [this fellowship]....Thanks to this support, I have conducted two randomized experiments in the Middle East and started an agenda on the impact of technology and digitalization on marginalized communities. As a fellow, I further developed this agenda and got to present the work at leading universities and at international organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the IFC.”

**Jeremy M. Weinstein, Dean and Don K. Price Professor of Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School**

“The Emirates Leadership Initiative has established itself as a cornerstone of the Kennedy School’s efforts to advance in the United Arab Emirates and the broader Arab region our global mission: building capacity and developing the next generation of leaders; facilitating the exchanges of ideas, expertise, and know-how; and advancing scholarship and identifying evidence-based solutions to the most pressing public policy challenges. As we celebrate ten years of this fruitful program, we look forward to working toward a more secure, peaceful, and sustainably prosperous future for all for decades to come.”

**Layane Alhorri, 2023-2024 ELI Research Fellow**







# Journey to the Arabian Gulf: J-Term Course on Leadership and Social Transformation in the Arab World

**The ELI Experiential Learning Course is a for-credit HKS module that brings Harvard students to the United Arab Emirates during the University’s January Term.**

Conceived and designed by Professor Tarek Masoud and co-instructed by ELI Senior Fellow Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, the 2022 and 2024 iterations of the course, entitled, “Classroom-in-the-Field: Leadership and Social Transformation in the Arab World,” brought a combined total of 31 Harvard students to Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, and Ras Al-Khaimah to explore firsthand the rapid economic and social developments taking place across the nation and the role of leadership in sparking and managing the pace of that change. To provide students with a comparative perspective, the 2024 iteration incorporated a two-day excursion to neighboring Saudi Arabia. Through a series of closed meetings with local decisionmakers, thought leaders, and other experts, as well as visits to government agencies, educational institutions, think tanks, museums, and other locations, students gained not only a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the region’s dynamism and challenges, but also a grounded understanding of the region’s present and future.



“During the two weeks of Leadership and Social Transformation in the Arab World, I learned more than I do most semesters at Harvard. The course upended my most fundamental notions about government and society by presenting me with radically different models thereof. In the United Arab Emirates, I encountered a bold and optimistic vision for the future — an attitude I hope my own country emulates.”

**Irati Eworo Diez, Bachelor of Arts Candidate in Government at Harvard College**



# From Crisis to Conversation: MEI Since October 7

Adapted from, “Diving Deep into Disagreements on the Israeli-Hamas War at Harvard Kennedy School,” by James Smith, Harvard Kennedy School.

Just days after Hamas staged its deadly terror attack against southern Israel on Oct. 7, Harvard Kennedy School Professor Tarek Masoud launched what has become an extensive series of discussions at Harvard on the Israel-Hamas war, its historical roots, and what lies ahead.

At a time when universities across the country, Harvard included, were swept up in protests and arguments over what had happened and should happen, Masoud plunged into the most potentially divisive policy and political issues—from the war itself to antisemitism and free speech. In the fall, he hosted three heavily attended panel discussions and additional seminars with academics and diplomats. This year, from February through April, he shifted to an interview format for what he called the Middle East Dialogues, a series of one-on-one conversations with six experts on the issues and the region.

The speakers’ views could hardly have been more divergent. These 90-minute events drew rapt audiences of students, faculty and staff from across the University. Masoud challenged and probed for an intense discussion with each guest, then invited questions from the audience. The conversations at times grew testy and there was one brief silent protest, but all six sessions proceeded civilly and without disruption.

Read excerpts from the conversations here.

Masoud didn’t shy away from the emotions that sometimes flowed in the packed conference room. “I don’t think we, as an institution, should be necessarily surprised or shocked that people become agitated around this issue,” he told the Harvard Gazette. “We’re talking about an issue that people experience viscerally, and we’re trying to get them to experience it cerebrally. Sometimes that’s hard. But I hope that our events have modeled for people how that can be done.”

Masoud, the Ford Foundation Professor of Democracy and Governance, is faculty chair of the Middle East Initiative in the School’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. He also leads the Democracy in Hard Places Project—and often notes that the Middle East may be the hardest of all places for democracy to thrive.

One of the most controversial speakers in the series was Dalal Saeb Iriqat, a professor at the Arab American University Palestine, whose tweets on and after October 7 appeared to support the Hamas terror attack. Masoud pressed her to

explain the tweets. Iriqat noted that she had sent the tweet at dawn on Oct. 7 before details of the nature of the Hamas attack were known and that she was not a Hamas surrogate. She spoke about the long history of violence in the region and suffering of Palestinians over many decades. Masoud noted that her views are similar to those held by many Palestinians and need to be understood.

On the other side of the policy spectrum in the series, guest Jared Kushner stoutly defended Israel’s invasion of Gaza and pursuit of Hamas. Kushner was Middle East advisor to his father-in-law, then-President Donald Trump, and led negotiations that resulted in the Abraham Accords, peace treaties between Israel and several Arab countries. The only protest during any event occurred during Kushner’s talk, when several students held up signs criticizing U.S. policy and silently walked out of the event.

Kennedy School Dean Douglas Elmendorf said this week that the Middle East Dialogues had proved to be a valuable contribution to learning at Harvard about the war in Israel and Gaza and the decades-long strife that preceded it.

“Professor Tarek Masoud’s Middle East Dialogues series has been a courageous example of the Kennedy School’s duty to air disparate views on policy issues with huge stakes for the world,” Elmendorf said. “These dialogues have modeled the best of the School’s convening role, enabling students to hear many different ideas in candid and constructive conversations, including ideas with which they may disagree deeply.”

Masoud, born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, is the son of Egyptian immigrants and grew up partly in Saudi Arabia. So he brings a personal as well as scholarly grasp of the complexities of the region. And he welcomes the challenges of holding tough conversations at Harvard in this impassioned season.

“The feedback has been largely supportive and positive within the University. People at Harvard understand that this is the kind of thing we have to do,” Masoud told the Gazette. “If we can’t have a conversation about what’s happening in the Middle East with a professor from Ramallah, or with a former Israeli parliamentarian, or with a former Middle East policymaker from the Trump administration, or with one of Bernie Sanders’ foreign policy advisers, then we’re not really doing our job.”

“There would be something deeply wrong with an institution that could not convene those kinds of conversations,” Masoud added. “I’m pleased to say that there isn’t anything deeply wrong with Harvard. We’ve been having those conversations. Our students and my colleagues have been complete adults about it.”

Erica Chenoweth, HKS Academic Dean for Faculty Engagement and the Frank Stanton Professor of the First Amendment, led the Kennedy School’s task force last year on improving the ability to hold tough conversations across difference. “Professor Masoud’s series provided crucial learning opportunities and rigorous discussions about a challenging topic,” Chenoweth said. “I am grateful to him for convening these dialogues and for modeling how to do them well.”



<b>Jared Kushner</b>	<b>Matt Duss</b>	<b>Dalal Saeb Iriqat</b>	<b>Salam Fayyad</b>	<b>Einat Wilf</b>	<b>Bret Stephens</b>
former senior advisor to President Donald Trump and author of <i>Breaking History: A White House Memoir</i>	former foreign policy advisor to Senator Bernie Sanders and Executive Vice-President, Center for International Policy	professor of diplomacy and conflict resolution, Arab American University in Ramallah	MEI Senior Fellow and former Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority	author and former member of Knesset	<i>The New York Times</i> opinion columnist and founder and editor-in-chief of SAPIR



➔ Watch the Middle East Dialogues here





# Convening Critical Conversations for the Harvard Community

## On October 13th,

Professor Masoud convened a panel discussion in the JFK Jr. Forum featuring MEI Senior Fellow and former Ambassador to Israel and Syria Edward Djerejian, Professor Shibley Telhami of the University of Maryland, and Professor Shai Feldman of Brandeis University to unpack the tragic events of the prior week, the historical and recent factors that led up to that point, and what they thought might come next.

## On October 18th,

MEI Senior Fellow and former Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority Salam Fayyad sat down with Professor Masoud to discuss the war and its impact on Gaza and the West Bank, Palestinian political fragmentation, and prospects for Palestinian statehood.

## On October 19th,

MEI Fellow Avner Halperin joined Professor Masoud to analyze the Israeli perspective on the war and the future of coexistence.

## On October 23rd,

MEI brought back Professor Feldman, along with Dr. Abdel Monem Said Aly, Director of the Regional Center for Strategic Studies in Cairo, and Professor Khalil Shikaki, Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, to take stock of unfolding events, analyze the implications of President Biden's visit to Israel, and look at what opportunities for diplomacy might emerge from current conditions.

In addition to the Middle East Dialogues, in the fall of 2023, MEI convened a range of public and closed events focused on Israel and Gaza.



here? Where are we heading?

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2023

3:30-5:00 PM

KLARMAN HALL

REGISTER: [hbs.me/CommunityPanel](https://hbs.me/CommunityPanel)

REGISTRATION REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION

Join us for a panel discussion with esteemed scholars and experts about the recent tragedies facing the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, the historical and current factors that led to this conflict, and

PANEL:  
**Tarek Masoud**, Moderator  
Harvard Kennedy School  
**Shai Feldman**  
Brandeis University  
**Amaney Jamal**  
Princeton University  
**David Makovsky**  
The Washington Institute & Koret Project on Arab-Israeli Relations  
**Khalil Shikaki**  
Brandeis University

HARVARD Kennedy School

## On November 20th,

MEI partnered with Harvard Business School to host a panel in Klarman Hall featuring Dean Amaney Jamal of Princeton University, David Makovsky of The Washington Institute, Professor Khalil Shikaki of Brandeis University, and Professor Shai Feldman of Brandeis University, moderated by Professor Tarek Masoud, to discuss the recent and unfolding tragedies and examine the broader geopolitical implications.



Along with these public events, MEI also hosted closed conversations and sessions for HKS students and fellows. In November, Professor Masoud and Ambassador Djerejian led a teach-in for Master of Public Policy students at the Kennedy School. Journalist Omar Rahman sat down with Professor Masoud for a frank discussion on his analysis of Israel and Gaza for HKS students. Dean Amaney Jamal of Princeton also spoke in a closed session for fellows and students about her perspective on how we had reached this point. MEI also facilitated a number of closed dialogues for students, moderated by our affiliates including Yael Berda, Salam Fayyad, and James Snyder.



# In the Media: MEI Responds to the Israel - Gaza War

## Tarek Masoud on Fareed Zakaria's GPS



**Tarek Masoud**  
**CNN, 19 November 2023**  
[x.com/FareedZakaria/status/1726321856142073870.](https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/19/politics/tarek-masoud-fareed-zakaria-gps/index.html)

## Edward Djerejian on ABC News



**Edward Djerejian**  
**ABC News, 14 March 2024**  
[abcnews.go.com/Politics/video/senate-majority-leader-schumer-netanyahu-longer-fits-israel-108133956.](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/video/senate-majority-leader-schumer-netanyahu-longer-fits-israel-108133956/)

## Israel Must Take a Bold Step Toward Peace

**Noah Feldman and Mohammed Alyahya**  
**Bloomberg News, 9 December 2023**

[https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2023-12-09/peace-in-gaza-israel-must-take-bold-steps-to-end-war-with-hamas.](https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2023-12-09/peace-in-gaza-israel-must-take-bold-steps-to-end-war-with-hamas)

## A Plan for Peace in Gaza

**Salam Fayyad**  
**Foreign Affairs, 27 October 2023**

[www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/plan-for-peace-gaza-fayyad.](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel/plan-for-peace-gaza-fayyad)

## The Middle East Conflict That the U.S. Can't Stay Out Of

**Juliette Kayyem**  
**The Atlantic, 24 December 2023**

[www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/12/suez-canal-houthi-gaza-biden/676973/.](https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/12/suez-canal-houthi-gaza-biden/676973/)

## Why Iran Is Gambling on Hamas

**Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar**  
**Foreign Affairs, 1 November 2023**

[www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/why-iran-gambling-hamas.](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/why-iran-gambling-hamas)

## The day-after peace in Gaza will be fragile. Here's how to make it work.

**Sharan Grewal and Shady ElGhazaly Harb**  
**Washington Post, 22 May 2024**

[www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/05/22/gaza-peace-egypt-hamas-israel/.](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/05/22/gaza-peace-egypt-hamas-israel/)

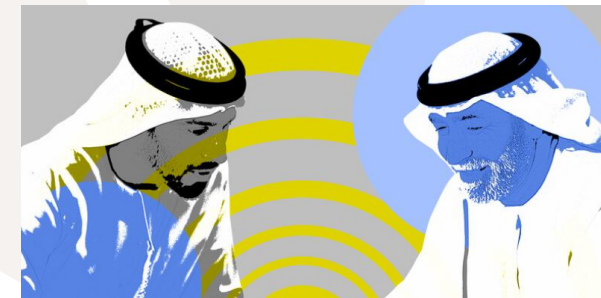
## Houthis in the Footsteps of Hizbullah

**Daniel Sobelman**  
**Survival: Global Politics and Strategy, Vol. 65, 8 June 2023**

[doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2023.2218704.](https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2023.2218704)

# More of MEI in the Media

## Succession planning in family businesses need not be an epic drama



**Sultan Al Qassemi**  
**The National, 22 September 2023**

[www.thenationalnews.com/weekend/2023/09/22/family-business-wills-succession-inheritance/.](https://www.thenationalnews.com/weekend/2023/09/22/family-business-wills-succession-inheritance/)

## The Protest to Parliament Pipeline: Investigating the Link Between Activism and Women's Political Participation in Iraq

**Marsin Alshamary**  
**Belfer Center for Science & International Affairs, July 2024**

[www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Paper\\_MEI\\_Protest%20to%20Parliament%20Pipeline\\_v1-2.pdf.](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Paper_MEI_Protest%20to%20Parliament%20Pipeline_v1-2.pdf)

## A New Era of Geopolitics Will Challenge Climate Plans

**Rabah Arezki**  
**Barrons, 27 November 2023**

[www.barrons.com/articles/a-new-era-of-geopolitics-will-challenge-climate-plans-cop28-e10bc98c.](https://www.barrons.com/articles/a-new-era-of-geopolitics-will-challenge-climate-plans-cop28-e10bc98c)

## Colonial Bureaucracy and Contemporary Citizenship: Legacies of Race and Emergency in the Former British Empire

**Yael Berda,**  
**Cambridge University Press, 2022**

[www.cambridge.org/core/books/colonial-bureaucracy-and-contemporary-citizenship/29EA22ED1D60802C6B59D9F56958F6D2.](https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/colonial-bureaucracy-and-contemporary-citizenship/29EA22ED1D60802C6B59D9F56958F6D2)

## How Disinformation Fueled the Tunisian Revolution



**Sharan Grewal**  
**New Lines Magazine, 12 January 2024**

[newlinesmag.com/essays/how-disinformation-fueled-the-tunisian-revolution/.](https://newlinesmag.com/essays/how-disinformation-fueled-the-tunisian-revolution/)

## Reforming Algeria's Social Protection System

**Adel Hamaizia, et al.,**  
**Chatham House, November 2023**

[www.chathamhouse.org/2023/11/reforming-algerias-social-protection-system.](https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/11/reforming-algerias-social-protection-system)

## Who Supports Gender Quotas in Transitioning and Authoritarian States in the Middle East and North Africa?

**Yuree Noh and Marwa Shalaby**  
**Comparative Political Studies, 2024**

[doi.org/10.1177/00104140241237476.](https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140241237476)

## Ten Years after Yazidi Genocide: Justice Still Pending, Extremism Threats Persist

**Barham Salih**  
**Asharq Al-Awsat, 3 August 2024**

[english.aawsat.com/node/5046726.](https://english.aawsat.com/node/5046726)

## Economic Sanctions and Food Consumption: Evidence from Iranian Households

**Peyman Asadzade, et al.**  
**International Studies Quarterly, vol. 68, June 2024**

[doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqae103.](https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqae103)



# Senior Fellows: Where Theory Meets Experience

## Study Groups:

### In Spring 2023

MEI Senior Fellow Edward Djerejian led the study group “Frozen Conflict – Discussing Israel/Palestine,” which explored the human roots of the conflict, the human toll it has taken, and potential solutions. Drawing upon decades of diplomatic experience in this region, including as former U.S. Ambassador to Israel and to Syria and as the former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Djerejian designed this interactive study group to emphasize discussion in order to best understand the complex issues involved in igniting conflict and the potential approaches to finding a resolution.

“Harvard offers many incredible opportunities—and Dr. Chahed’s study group has been one of them for me. Prime Minister Chahed’s unique personal experience of the Arab Spring as both an activist, and then governing Tunisia post-revolution, offered eye-opening insights into the sparks that fly when idealism meets the intricacies of real-world governance. This study group offered clear explanations and enlightening discussions.”

**Mark van de Fliert, Master in Public Administration in International Development**

### In Fall 2023

Former Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and MEI Senior Fellow Dr. Omar Razzaz (photo A) led the study group “Policy vs. Politics: Insights from the field in reforming social protection, education, taxation, and public sector accountability.” Drawing on his decades of public service, this study group explored the processes and pitfalls of achieving political and economic reform. By analyzing reform attempts in social protection, education, taxation, and public sector accountability, the group identified essential building blocks in the reform process and potential pitfalls along the way. Specifically, while “realism” has taught us that “politics is the art of the possible,” the group asked how we can manage short term political interests without losing sight of longer-term policy objectives, which render development results in the long term. Dr. Razzaz shared his extensive experience as a leading policymaker in Jordan and the Middle East to highlight real-world examples of “policy vs. politics.”

MEI Senior Fellow and former Editor-in-Chief of Al Arabiya English Mohammed Alyahya taught the study group “From Wealth to Power: the Arabian Gulf Rising Amidst Great Power Competition,” which examined how, amid tectonic shifts in great power competition, and after the failure of the Arab spring in remaking Arab societies, a power vacuum has been left in one of the world’s most strategically valuable — and volatile — regions. Participants were asked to unpack the question: will the United States or China emerge as the great power in the region for the decade to come, or will leadership come from within — Iran or Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Gulf states?

“Working with Dr. Razzaz is an immense privilege. I learn from him in each of our weekly meetings, not only gaining deep insights into world politics but also understanding how he reasons, communicates and leads. This exposure is shaping my character in ways that will greatly benefit my future career in public service.”

**Farid Hannan, Master in Public Administration in International Development**

### In Spring 2024

Dr. Youssef Chahed, former Prime Minister of Tunisia (2016-2020) and MEI Senior Fellow, taught the study group “Building Democracy in the Arab World: An Insider Perspective,” offering a unique insider view of Tunisia’s struggle for democracy and economic growth since 2011. Participants learned about the concrete challenges leaders faced while seeking to advance democracy and economic growth in the Arab context. Together, participants analyzed what institutional and political drivers promoted and constrained Tunisia’s democratic development, and what lessons might be learned for the future.







A



B



C



D

## Senior Fellows in Action:

### In March 2023,

At the ELI Alumni Gathering in Abu Dhabi, attended by 35 alumni and guests, MEI Senior Fellow and former Prime Minister of Tunisia Dr. Youssef Chahed, alongside Senior Fellow Professor Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, discussed leadership lessons on a panel moderated by Center for Public Leadership co-director and former Governor of Massachusetts Deval Patrick. (Photo A)

Also that month, a contingent of MEI senior fellows participated in the 2023 Arab Conference at Harvard. MEI Senior Fellow and former Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Dr. Omar Razzaz, MEI Senior Fellow and former Minister of Social Affairs in Kuwait Dr. Ghadeer Aseri, and MEI Senior Fellow and former Prime Minister of Tunisia Dr. Youssef Chahed spoke on a panel discussing "Policy, Politics, and Leadership." (Photo B)

### In Fall 2023,

In addition to his work on Israel and Palestine, MEI Senior Fellow and former Ambassador to Israel and Syria Edward Djerejian began preparations for a new working group on the internal and external politics of the South Caucasus to be launched in the 2024-25 academic year. (Photo C)

### In Spring 2024,

Senior Fellow Dr. Abdulkhaleq Abdulla published the paper "The Gulf Moment and the Making of the Khaleeji State," which argues for putting aside the old rentier state paradigm that has long dominated Gulf literature, considering the emergence of both the Gulf Moment and the United Arab Emirates's Momentum; and, instead, offering a novel analytical concept of the Khaleeji state, incorporating both the exceptionalist and normalist approaches to Gulf studies. (Photo D)



# Showcasing Faculty Research

Soroush Saghafian, Associate Professor of Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School

## Improving Population Health in the Middle East via Machine Learning and AI-Enabled Mobile Health Interventions:

In western countries, various technological advancements in the Internet of Things, wearable devices, mobile technologies, and new tools for developing user-friendly smartphone applications have resulted in significant changes in healthcare delivery. As a result, mobile health and digital health interventions are now widely used in improving health outcomes in the western world, but their use in Middle East countries has been lagging. Supported by a grant from the Kuwait Program at Harvard University and led by Professor Soroush Saghafian—Associate Professor of Public Policy and the founder and director of the Public Impact Analytics Science Lab at Harvard—“Improving Population Health in the Middle East via Machine Learning and AI-Enabled Mobile Health Interventions” investigates scientific and regulatory challenges in using mHealth interventions, and aims at creating collaboration mechanisms that can help to address them. Professor Saghafian and his team, including Ph.D. students, postdoctoral fellows, and Dr. Abdullah Alibrahim—Assistant Professor of Industrial & Management Systems Engineering at the College of Engineering & Petroleum, Kuwait University, and Research Fellow at the Harvard Middle East Initiative—worked to study and address the underlying barriers.

Photo by COP28/Anthony Fleyhan, AP Newsroom



Daniel P. Schrag, Professor of Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School; Sturgis Hooper Professor of Geology and Professor of Environmental Science and Engineering, Harvard University

## How the United Arab Emirates COP28 Presidency Can Use Article 6 of the Paris Agreement for Leadership on Crossborder Investment in Renewable Energy in the MENA Region:

In November 2023, the United Arab Emirates was delegated as the host and leader of COP28, the annual United Nations climate change conference. The congregation of world leaders, climate experts, and policymakers in Dubai followed a suite of high-profile Emirati leadership, both regionally, for example through Masdar, and globally, including the Dubai World Expo in 2022. As part of its COP agenda, the United Arab Emirates announced ambitious climate targets, as evidenced in the country's latest emissions reductions goal. This goal was released in September 2022 with a 31% greenhouse gas emission reduction target by 2030, which ties into the wider Emirati goal of modernizing and diversifying the economy. This objective is also outlined in the Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030 or Dubai Vision 2040, where both plans emphasize decreasing reliance on hydrocarbons, leveraging the financial sector to increase job growth, and increasing sustainability overall in the United Arab Emirates (Al-Saidi, Zaidan & Hammad, 2019). This research project deals with Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which was finalized during the UK's Presidency at COP26 in 2021. Article 6 allows countries to 'trade' carbon credit, where carbon emissions reductions in one country count for the NDC of another (World Bank, 2020). For the United Arab Emirates, Article 6 should offer a win-win-win. First, by acquiring carbon credits, the United Arab Emirates would be able to meet their climate targets, amongst the most ambitious for countries of similar levels of development. Second, Article 6 offers the potential to grow domestic expertise in renewable energy and in finance, that could help domestic diversification. Third, by investing abroad and leading on international climate collaboration at fora such as COP28, the United Arab Emirates could demonstrate regional leadership. The operational efforts from Article 6 showcase a possible large gain for the United Arab Emirates and demonstrate a model for the how this system could be effective.



# Research Fellows



Layane Alhorr

Layane Alhorr was a research fellow for the 2023 - 2024 academic year. She is currently an Associate with Cornerstone Research. She graduated from her PhD at the Harvard Kennedy School in May 2024 in development, labor, and behavioral economics. She uses natural and field experiments to study digital technologies' impact in developing countries, with a focus on how these technologies interact with local cultures and norms. Her main research has focused on the impact of social media on female entrepreneurship in the context of Jordan. During her PhD, Layane has taught executive education courses and undergraduate classes at Harvard, including classes on Survey Research Methods and on the Economics of Social Media. Before her PhD, she was a researcher at JPAL MIT and spent time in Kenya working on digital financial inclusion projects. As a Fulbright scholar, she pursued a Masters' degree in International and Development Economics at Yale University.



Abdullah Alibrahim

Abdullah Alibrahim was a Kuwait Program Research Fellow (in residence Spring 2023). He is currently an Assistant Professor of Industrial and Management Systems Engineering at the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University. His research bridges disciplinary gaps between innovative engineering methods and pressing healthcare challenges to improve system design and performance. Alibrahim holds a Ph.D. in Industrial and Systems Engineering from the University of Southern California (USC, 2017). He also has a master's degree in Operations Research Engineering from USC (2015), and a master's and bachelor's degrees in Industrial and Systems Engineering from the University of Wisconsin, Madison (2011 and 2010, respectively). His research employs Systems Engineering and Complexity Science approaches to healthcare system financing, design, and operations. He specializes in computational simulation, advanced data analytics, and machine learning to inform the design of healthcare policies and processes.



Nasir Almasri

Nasir Almasri was a research fellow for the 2023 - 2024 academic year. He is currently Postdoctoral Scholar with the Society of Fellows at Boston University. He received a PhD in Political Science from MIT in May 2024 in development, labor, and behavioral economics. He specializes in the politics of opposition movements in the Middle East. His doctoral dissertation examines the conditions under which exclusion from politics leads to the moderation or radicalization of activists. He draws on archival work and extensive interviews with Egyptian Islamists, Palestinian Nationalists, and Iraqi Communists to illustrate the ways that exclusion transforms the strategies and ideologies of these activists. His other research entails rethinking the moderate-radical dichotomy and examining the causes and consequences of ideological tensions on minority and diaspora-based social movements.



Peyman Asadzade

Peyman Asadzade was a research fellow for the 2022 - 2023 academic year. His research interests include conflict studies, authoritarian rule, and political behavior and attitude. While Peyman's primary focus is the Middle East, his research addresses broad questions and involves a variety of contexts around the world. His articles have been published in Conflict Management and Peace Science, Research & Politics, Journal of Global Security Studies, and Nations & Nationalism. He has also written articles for the Monkey Cage of The Washington Post. Dr. Asadzade holds a Ph.D. in political science from Arizona State University, an M.A. in political science from the University of Tehran, and a B.A. in history & Islamic studies from the University of Tehran.



Lotem Bassan-Nygate

Lotem Bassan-Nygate was a research fellow for the 2022 - 2023 academic year. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School. Her research lies at the intersection of international relations, political psychology, and experimental methods, with regional expertise in Israel. In her book project, Lotem develops a multi-audience theory of foreign criticism that sheds light on the motives and intended and unintended consequences of 'naming and shaming'. Lotem's ongoing work examines how human rights shaming shapes attitudes at home; the role of racial rhetoric in shaping dynamics of foreign criticism; and the generalizability of international relations experiments beyond the U.S. Her work has appeared in several journals including Comparative Political Studies and Journal of Experimental Political Science. Lotem completed her PhD in Political Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2023.



Sharan Grewal

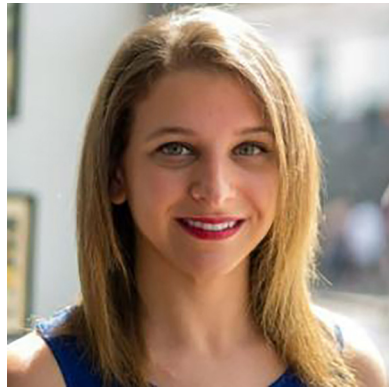
Sharan Grewal was a research fellow for the 2023 - 2024 academic year. He is currently an Assistant Professor of Government at American University. He received a PhD in Politics from Princeton University in 2018, and was a post-doctoral fellow at Brookings from 2018-19. Sharan's research examines revolutions and democratic transitions in the Arab world. His first book, *Soldiers of Democracy? Military Legacies and the Arab Spring* (Oxford University Press, July 2023), explores the conditions under which militaries support or thwart democratic transitions. Sharan's work has also been published in the American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, and British Journal of Political Science, among other journals. His work has won Best Paper Awards from APSA's Democracy & Autocracy section and from APSA's Middle East and North Africa section, as well as the Perry World House-Foreign Affairs Emerging Scholars Prize.





**Adel Hamaizia**

Adel Hamaizia was a research fellow for the 2023 - 2024 academic year. He is a doctoral researcher at the University of Oxford, where he previously taught Middle East Politics. He was formerly a visiting fellow at Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and previously a senior teaching fellow at the Department of Financial and Management Studies at SOAS, University of London. His primary research interests include: political economy, geoeconomics, energy policy, state-business relations, MSMEs and the informal sector across MENA (with a particular focus on the Maghreb and the GCC states). More recently he has led research and policy projects on China-MENA relations, GCC-Africa relations, GCC energy transitions, and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. Adel is currently the Managing Director at London-based Highbridge Advisory, a strategic boutique advisory focused on information advantage, risk mitigation, policy development and implementation for companies and governments working in the Middle East, the Balkans, and Africa (MEBA).



**Rima Majed**

Rima Majed was a research fellow for the 2022 - 2023 academic year. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Sociology in the Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies Department at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Her work focuses on the fields of social inequality, social movements, sectarianism, conflict, and violence. Dr. Majed has completed her PhD at the University of Oxford where she conducted her research on the relationship between structural changes, social mobilization, and sectarianism in Lebanon. She was a visiting fellow at the Mamdouha S. Bobst Center for Peace and Justice at Princeton University in 2018/19. Her work has appeared in several journals, books and media platforms such as Social Forces, Mobilization, Routledge Handbook on the Politics of the Middle East, Middle East Law and Governance Journal, Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of the Middle East, Global Dialogue, Idafat: The Arab Journal of Sociology, Al Jumhuriya, OpenDemocracy, Jacobin, Middle East Eye, CNN and Al Jazeera English. She is also the co-editor of the upcoming book The Lebanon Uprising of 2019: Voices from the Revolution (I.B. Tauris, 2022), and the Principal Investigator on the "Critical Approaches to Development Studies" project at the American University of Beirut.



**Ameni Mehrez**

Ameni Mehrez was a research fellow for the 2023 - 2024 and 2024 - 2025 academic years. She is an incoming Assistant Professor at William & Mary College. She graduated with a PhD in comparative politics from the Central European University. She is a Junior Fellow at the Association for Analytic Learning about Islam and Muslim Societies (AALIMS). She is the chair of the Middle East and North Africa Space (MENAS) at CEU, the co-principal investigator of the Arab Elections project, and she was the co-principal investigator of a post-election survey fielded in Tunisia, which will contribute to the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). She is currently a member of the CSES Module 7 Planning Committee. She was a visiting fellow at the Mamdouha S. Bobst Center for Peace and Justice at Princeton University. She is running large-scale studies in Tunisia and other countries for her research in comparative politics. Her main areas of expertise are public opinion surveys, automated text analysis, and political ideologies in the Arab World.



**Özgür Özkan**

Özgür Özkan was a research fellow for the 2022 - 2023 academic year. He is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Politics at Bates College. He holds a PhD in International Studies from the University of Washington, Seattle and an M.A. in Regional Security Studies (Russia-Eurasia) from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA. Before pursuing an academic career, he served as an officer in the Turkish army and NATO. Özgür's research lies at the nexus of international security and comparative politics with a regional specialization in Turkey and the Middle East. He primarily studies the efficiency and accessibility of security institutions, particularly the military, focusing on organizational culture, social composition, technology, and their implications for authoritarianism and political violence. Özgür is working on a book project based on his dissertation exploring the officer recruitment and promotion patterns and their interaction international and intrastate conflicts in Turkey since the late Ottoman period.



**Sarah Smierciak**

Sarah Smierciak was a research fellow for the 2022 - 2023 academic year. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the American University in Cairo (AUC). She holds a PhD in Middle East Studies and a Master's in International Development from the University of Oxford where she studied as a Rhodes Scholar. Her research sits at the intersection of international development and political economy in the MENA, with a focus on poverty, inequality and corruption. She authored Cronyism and Elite Capture in Egypt: From Businessmen Cabinet to Military Inc. (Routledge 2021) and co-edited the Routledge Handbook on Contemporary Egypt (2021). Her monograph focuses on business-state relations in Egypt in the two decades leading up to the January 2011 uprising and its aftermath. As an analyst, Dr. Smierciak has written dozens of reports and policy briefs for international consulting firms on political economic developments in the region. She has conducted research throughout Egypt and in Istanbul, Turkey as a Fulbright Scholar. She holds a B.A. in History and Middle East Studies from Northwestern University, where she graduated summa cum laude.



**Mohammad Tabaar**

Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar was a research fellow for the 2023 - 2024 academic year. He is currently an Associate Professor of International Affairs at Texas A&M University's Bush School of Government and Public Service. He is also a fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy. His research areas include international security and Middle East politics. He is the author of Religious Statecraft: The Politics of Islam in Iran (Columbia University Press, 2018). His articles have appeared in Security Studies, Journal of Strategic Studies, PS: Political Science & Politics, Journal of Global Security Studies, Political Science Quarterly, and International Studies Review among others. Mohammad has also written for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, the Washington Post, and the New York Times. He has taught courses on U.S. foreign policy in the Persian Gulf, Middle East politics, and religion and politics in Iran. He is the recipient of the 2019 Faculty Excellence Award at the Bush School.





**2022-2023**

“The opportunity to spend a year at Harvard was a transformative experience that gave me time to focus on my research, create networks with academics in the U.S., and forge new collaborations. The Middle East Initiative was a supportive and thought-provoking scholarly ‘home’ from which I benefitted tremendously. I am grateful for this opportunity, and I hope more scholars from the region can benefit from this fellowship.”

**Rima Majed, ELI  
Research Fellow 2022-2023**

**2023-2024**

“I am truly grateful for the opportunity to join the MEI community. The engaging intellectual discussions have greatly expanded my understanding of the politics in the region and advanced my research. I’ve had the privilege to meet experts on a weekly basis who generously shared their insights and experiences. Also, I have not only found exceptional colleagues but also awesome friends within this community.”

**Ameni Mehrez, ELI  
Research Fellow 2023-2024**





# Event Highlights

In addition to programming on Israel and Gaza post-October 7th, throughout the 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years, MEI hosted top scholars and practitioners who shared their extensive expertise with the Harvard community on a wide variety of topics, including Libyan politics after the Arab Spring, the ongoing crisis in Sudan, and an exploration of Iranian culture through contemporary visual art.

## 2022-23:

**Reluctant Reception: Refugees, Migration and Governance in the Middle East and North Africa**  
(Photo A)

**Kelsey Norman**, Fellow for the Middle East at the Baker Institute at Rice University

**The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Muslim World**

**Kadir Yildirim**, Fellow for the Middle East at the Baker Institute at Rice University

**Classless Politics: Islamist Movements, the Left, and Authoritarian Legacies in Egypt**  
(Photo B)

**Hesham Sallam**, Associate Director for Research, Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law at Stanford University

**Time to Reboot: A Blueprint for the Palestinian Tech Sector**  
(Photos C1 and C2)

**Ely Sandler**, MPP '23

**Avner Halperin**, MEI Fellow and Israeli entrepreneur Mahmoud Khweis, Palestinian entrepreneur

**Libya After the Arab Spring: Between Internal Dynamics and External Agendas**

**Youssef Chahed**, MEI Senior Fellow and former Prime Minister of Tunisia

**Stephanie T. Williams**, former SG special representative for Libya and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya

**Frederic Wehrey**, Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace's Middle East Program

**Khaled Kaim**, former Deputy Foreign Minister of Libya

**Mohamed "Moin" Mansour Kikhia**, Chairman of the Libyan Democratic Institute

**Iran and Islam Through a Cultural Lens**

**Shirin Neshat**, Iranian-born artist

**James Snyder**, MEI Senior Fellow and Director, Jewish Museum

**Popular Politics and the Path to Durable Democracy**  
(Photo D)

**Mohammad Ali Kadivar**, Assistant Professor of Sociology and International Studies at Boston College

**Rima Majed**, MEI Research Fellow, Assistant Professor of Sociology at American University of Beirut

**Colonial Bureaucracy and Contemporary Citizenship**  
(Photo E)

**Yael Berda**, MEI Fellow and Associate Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Hebrew University

**The One State Reality: What is Israel-Palestine?**  
(Photo F)

**Nathan J. Brown**, Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University

**Shibley Telhami**, Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland

**Edward Djerejian**, MEI Senior Fellow and former Ambassador to Israel and Syria

**Urban Planning from the Ground Up**  
(Photo G)

**Tareq Nassar**, architect and urban planner

**James Snyder**, MEI Senior Fellow and Director, Jewish Museum

**Reviving the Golden Age: Empowering Great Arab Minds**

**H.E. Saeed Al Nazari**, Secretary General, Great Arab Minds Initiative







A



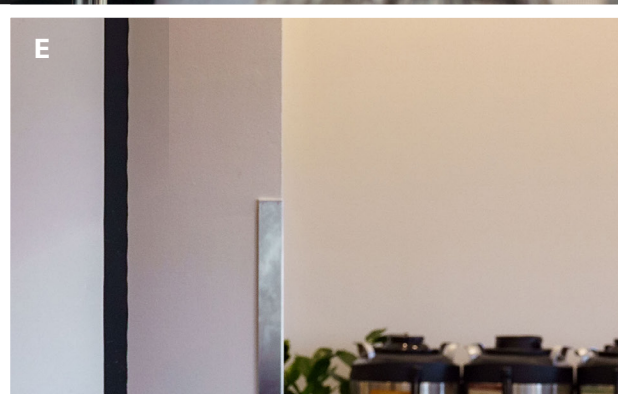
B



C



D



E



## 2023-24:

### Everyday Choices: The Role of Competing Authorities and Social Institutions in Politics and Development

(Photo A)

**Ellen Lust**, Professor of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg

### Soldiers of Democracy? Military Legacies in the Arab Spring

(Photo B)

**Sharan Grewal**, MEI Research Fellow and Assistant Professor of Government at the College of William & Mary

### 50 Years Since the 1973 Oil Embargo: Reflections and Perspectives

**Meghan O'Sullivan**, Jeane Kirkpatrick Professor of the Practice of International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School

**Mohammed Alyahya**, MEI Senior Fellow and former Editor-in-Chief, Al Arabiya English

**Helima Croft**, Managing Director and Global Head of Commodity Strategy, RBC Capital Markets

**Vijay Vaitheeswaran**, Global Energy & Climate Innovation Editor, The Economist

### Egypt in a Changing Middle East

(Photo C)

**Naguib Sawiris**, Chairman, Orascom TMT Investments

### In the Shade of the Sunna

(Photo D)

**Aaron Rock-Singer**, MEI Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor at University of Wisconsin - Madison

### Varieties of Protectionism: Neoliberal Reform in the Arab World

**Steve Monroe**, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Yale-NUS College

### Building Capabilities for the Government of the Future

**H.E. Dr. Yasir Al Naqbi**, Director General, GovAcademy, Abu Dhabi Department of Government Enablement

### Sudan in Crisis: Between Civil War and Military Rule

(Photo E)

**Alex de Waal**, Executive Director of the World Peace Foundation at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University

**Mai Hassan**, Associate Professor of Political Science at MIT



# 20 Years On: Operation Iraqi Freedom

To reflect on the 20th anniversary of the American invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2023, MEI held several events analyzing the context and consequences of the invasion, as well as the broader trajectory of American foreign policy in the region.

## 20 Years Since Operation Iraqi Freedom

### Meghan O’Sullivan

Jeane Kirkpatrick Professor of the Practice of International Affairs at Harvard Kennedy School (Photo A)

### Emma Sky

Founding Director of Yale’s International Leadership Center and former political advisor to the Commanding General of U.S. Forces in Iraq

### Kanan Makiya

Professor Emeritus of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at Brandeis University

## Instability Operations: America’s Wars Since 9/11

### Jason Brownlee

Professor of Government at the University of Texas at Austin (Photo B)

## U.S. Foreign Policy and the Muslim World

### Edward Djerejian

MEI Senior Fellow and former Ambassador to Israel and Syria (Photo C)



# Spotlight on Special Seminars

In addition to public events, MEI also convened a number of more intimate, off-the-record conversations on campus for students, fellows, and other members of the Harvard community on a variety of topics ranging from the media environment in the Gulf, business environments in Egypt, Bahraini foreign policy, Tunisian government support for burgeoning AI technology, the challenges and politics of human rights activism, and American foreign policy towards the Middle East. Alongside these discussions, MEI hosted a series of weekly community seminars for fellows, students, and members of the community to present research, workshop project ideas, and discuss the latest events from the Middle East.

**Omar H. Rahman**, Political Analyst, Fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs (Photo D)

**H.E. Shaikh Abdulla bin Rashid AlKhalifa**, the Kingdom of Bahrain’s Ambassador to the United States (Photo E)

**Yael Berda**, MEI Visiting Scholar and Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Hebrew University (Photo F)





# Building Expertise Beyond the Classroom

**Through the Emirates Leadership Initiative, MEI supports HKS students pursuing Middle East policy-relevant research projects and internships. Between the 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years, MEI awarded funding to nineteen students to facilitate their fieldwork and internship experiences.**

“The ELI funding allowed me to attend Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, and interview various stakeholders involved in potential pilots for Article 6 projects and testing some initial proposals, such as the possibility the United Arab Emirates to finance carbon mitigation infrastructure abroad.”

**Chanel Diaz, MPP 2023, Daniah Kheetan, MPP 2023, Saif Salah, MPP 2023, Ely Sandler, MPP 2023**  
Using Article 6 of the Paris Agreement to Meet the United Arab Emirates’ Climate Goals  
**Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates**

“This opportunity made possible by MEI was an ideal way to advance my graduate school and professional goals by learning about migration’s vast environment from within the leading intergovernmental organization in the field.”

**Beatriz Lichauco, MPP 2025**  
International Organization for Migration in  
**Cairo, Egypt**





Sophie Stoffel  
MPP 2024



Beatriz Lichauro  
MPP 2025



Zihaul Abdi  
MPA/ID 2025

## Internships and Research Funding

“Experts expressed their concern that regional conflict could spill over or tip the scale on another outbreak of violence in Iraq, with an increasing number of children and young adults as potential recruits to fight in such a conflict. Interviewees advise donors like Germany to pay attention to this gap in the child protection and security framework, as to not risk the billions of dollars invested in rebuilding after ISIS – and the futures of even more young Iraqis.”

**Sophie Stoffel, MPP 2024**  
Protecting Children in the Post-ISIS Areas in Northern Iraq: How Effective Are Germany’s Foreign Policy Instruments, **Amman, Jordan and Erbil, Iraq**

“The field work in Saudi Arabia was critical to developing a baseline analysis through interviews with key government agencies and NGOs as well as conduct a survey. The nationally representative survey, comprising over 1200 participants, was meticulously designed and successfully implemented to capture the nuances of Saudi Arabia’s lower-middle-income population.”

**Adhwaa Alsaleh, MPP 2024**  
The Missing Middle: Protecting the Expanding Vulnerable Middle Class from Falling under Poverty in **Saudi Arabia**

“I evaluated actions such as greener industrial policies impact employment, current ongoing initiatives to invest in and encourage green growth, and whether such initiatives can be replicated for other communities in both the United Arab Emirates and the region. I analyzed the United Arab Emirates efforts to invest more in hydrogen as a potential export product, look for untapped green export markets that will allow the United Arab Emirates to decarbonize, and examine trade policy as it relates to sustainable economic growth.”

**David Dam, MPP 2024**  
Ministry of Economy, **Dubai, United Arab Emirates**

“Improving the performance of corner stores in Egypt could have major implications for the Egyptian economy and the well-being of millions of Egyptians who rely on affordable necessities from their local corner stores. Digitization can be in the form of online payment systems, digital recordkeeping, restocking software, online delivery, and fintech financing solutions. Via interviews, this research project built an original data set to inform option sets for policy and commercial interventions.”

**Dina Ayoub and Gina Joseph, MPA/ID 2023**  
Digitization of Egyptian Corner Stores and its Impacts on Business Performance, **Cairo, Egypt**

“Our analysis and in-country research contributed significantly to United Nations Security Council’s Counterterrorism Executive Directorate programs on counterterrorism and countering violent extremism. The research provided recommendations that will support Jordan as it continues to combat terrorism.”

**Julian Baker and Rob Laxer, MPP 2023**  
Ensuring Humanitarian Aid and Development Assistance While Avoiding Terrorist Financing, **Amman, Jordan**

“The funding support from the Middle East Initiative has enabled me to undertake an internship in Rabat, Morocco, with Harvard’s Growth Lab. This internship pushed me to apply innovative, data-driven approaches to map Morocco’s industrial zone capabilities and explore its potential in green growth—an area with significant implications for the Middle East and North Africa.”

**Zihaul Abdi, MPA/ID 2025**  
Africa Business School, Mohammed VI Polytechnic University, **Rabat, Morocco**



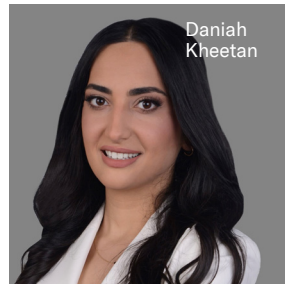
# Garnering Perspective from ELI Fellows

## Interview with ELI Student Fellows Daniah Kheetan and Yasmin Kayali:

**The MEI team spoke with Emirates Leadership Initiative 2023 Student Fellows Yasmin Kayali and Daniah Kheetan about their experience at HKS and their work organizing the Arab Conference at Harvard and the Women in Power conference. Yasmin was a Mid-Career/Master's in Public Administration candidate from Syria. Daniah was a Master in Public Policy candidate from Jordan. Their work combines humanitarian efforts and the business sector to create social and policy changes within Arab communities. This interview has been edited for clarity and length.**

**MEI:** Both of you joined the Harvard community with extensive leadership experience and once on campus you again assumed impressive leadership roles. Did these experiences teach you something new about leadership and teamwork? Were there any unexpected challenges? If so, how did you overcome them?

**YK:** In every experience and in every different team dynamic there is new and deeper learning. Specifically, coming from a completely different region and then working within HKS, with the Arab community also coming from all different parts of the world, working together within that team presented different kinds of challenges. From the first day that Daniah and I met at the fellowship, there was just a natural chemistry to the way that we functioned. That enhanced everything that we were able to do together. I'm very appreciative of this relationship and I think it's a lifetime relationship, with Daniah, and other people as well, but Daniah specifically. So you build relationships, you build alliances, you work within your cohorts, you work with your professors and you always lean into the plethora of people that you meet, be it through the fellowship, through MEI, or through the program at HKS. We



benefited from every single story and every single experience.

**DK:** Absolutely. I echo everything that Yasmin said. A little bit more about the Arab Conference at Harvard: for us specifically, it had been virtual for the past three years due to COVID, so we were met with the challenge of not having the people that did it in previous years there to learn from. I think that was definitely more of a unique challenge. Having people around like Yasmin, who wholeheartedly believed in the idea or the mission of getting the Arab community and having it group together to become more of a voice in the Harvard larger community, not just HKS, was so important.

**MEI:** Daniah, your Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE) project, "Vision COP 28: Unlocking Article 6 of the Paris Agreement" with Chanel Diaz, Saif Salah, and Ely Sandler, won the Kennedy School's award for best PAE in environmental policy. Can you tell us about the project and why it stood out?

**DK:** My teammates and I based our work off of a previous paper that Ely wrote with Professor Schrag in 2022. We were looking at how the United Arab Emirates can use Article 6 of the Paris Agreement to meet its three-pronged climate goals. First is decarbonization, two is diversification of the economy, and three is regional leadership. What was different was that we're dealing with Masdar and Mubadala and the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment. They were our main clients. The whole idea was us pitching a different approach, a tool for them to launch and use something different in COP28. The United Arab Emirates will be leading one of the first pilot projects of Article 6 from the Paris Agreement. What we were trying to do is empower some of these high level meetings and projects to come out with something more tangible, an actual pilot that the United Arab Emirates can use and lead with on regional leadership, so hitting the third part of the goal. It wasn't just about hitting the basic decarbonization and diversification goals of the United Arab Emirates, but we're trying to push for them to genuinely become a regional – and not just regional, but international – leader in what it means to change the climate and reach net-zero. I think that's what resonated for people and the professors that

were analyzing who should get the award. It's a tangible real difference and an approach that a country and hopefully multiple countries can adopt.

**MEI:** Yasmin, in February 2023, you were starting your spring term at HKS when an earthquake ravaged your home country, Syria, as well as Turkey. Can you tell us about this especially challenging experience and how you were able to effectively mobilize colleagues and fundraise?

**YK:** This catastrophe was very, very close to home – very close to the epicenter of the earthquake is Aleppo, which is my city, where I was born and grew up. And my organization works in Aleppo and in Turkey. So, a lot of our own employees were impacted, my own friends who had sought refuge in Turkey from the war in Syria. In addition to that, I think after the Beirut explosion and our experience with stepping in with an emergency response there, and fundraising, it just came automatically. For the first week there was just no thought, no sleep, just springing into action – how to help people, what's best to do, reaching out to our already existing platform of donors and then using our reputation, we were able to get other donors to reach out to us. What was very different this time was the community at HKS, and at ELI more specifically. They stood by me. The way Daniah and the rest of the leadership team of the Arab Conference stepped up, the way we switched the gala into a fundraiser, everybody was behind it. The undergrad SAS (Harvard Society of Arab Students) group, did an amazing job with their own fundraising, which really created a lot of coverage for what was going on. It allowed for things to ripple out and I'm very thankful for this. Eventually, we were able to raise more than \$6 million in total. The response is actually still going on. I know it's old news to a lot of people, but there are many people who are still living in camps, still in tents with no home to go back to. Double-displaced because they were displaced before due to the war and now they're displaced again because of the earthquake. Again, like everything else, it's all about the network, the people that stand by you, and there are people who had nothing to do with this who stepped up, who were supporting, who gave me a platform to speak, educate, fundraise. People gave whatever they could, even as students I always say, "Knock on every door. You never know which door is going to open." This is my philosophy always with everything, I knock on every door, and I see what works. I truly believe that people want to do good. You just need to give them the avenue to put that good forward.



**Khalid Mezaina**  
United Arab Emirates, b. 1985  
*Windtower*, 2010  
Serigraph on paper, 85 x 120 cm  
Collection of Barjeel Art  
Foundation, Sharjah





# Cultivating Leadership for a Changing World

To help the United Arab Emirates and the broader Arab region navigate future challenges, we must invest in developing thoughtful, capable leadership. The ELI Graduate Student Fellowship supports this goal by enabling talented students to pursue advanced training at the Harvard Kennedy School. By reducing financial barriers, the fellowship expands access to transformative opportunities and ensures that emerging leaders from the region are equipped with the skills and insights needed to shape meaningful change in their communities and beyond.

The ELI Graduate Student Fellowship provides a full-tuition scholarship, health insurance, a living stipend, and a comprehensive co-curricular program for a cohort of ten HKS degree candidates each year from the United Arab Emirates and the Arab world. Fellows participate in a robust year-long leadership development program at the Kennedy School's Center for Public Leadership.

The ELI Fellowship offers a personalized learning experience that helps fellows maximize their potential as public leaders. Through a shared process grounded in self-directed and experiential learning, reflection, peer support, and mentorship, fellows build a tailored learning practice aligned with their individual goals. The program's structure is designed to support them throughout their time at the Harvard Kennedy School, empowering them to make the most of the experience.

## 2022-2023:

**Zubaidah Al-Awadhi**  
Mid-Career Master in Public Administration 2023

**Saeed Alkaabi**  
Mid-Career Master in Public Administration 2023

**Sybil Fares**  
Master in Public Administration 2023

**Yasmin Kayali**  
Mid-Career Master in Public Administration 2023

**Mustafa Khalifeh**  
Mid-Career Master in Public Administration 2023

**Daniah Kheetan**  
Master in Public Policy 2023

**Nesrine Mbarek**  
Master in Public Policy 2023

**Nacer Mohamed Chrif Tayeb**  
Mid-Career Master in Public Administration 2023

## 2023-2024:

**Issam Abail Eddine**  
Master in Public Administration 2024

**Léa Aboumoussa**  
Master in Public Policy 2024

**Fatema Al-Awadhi**  
Mid-Career Master in Public Administration 2024

**Hamad Alderei**  
Mid-Career Master in Public Administration 2024, Edward S. Mason Program

**Amina Benzakour Knidel**  
Master in Public Policy 2024

**Farah El Rohayem**  
Master in Public Policy 2025

**Bilel Ferrat**  
Mid-Career Master in Public Administration 2025, Edward S. Mason Program

**Shan Sherwan Hussein**  
Mid-Career Master in Public Administration 2024, Edward S. Mason Program

**Rasha Musleh**  
Master in Public Administration 2024, Edward S. Mason Program

**Mohammed Omer**  
Master in Public Policy 2024







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**Lateefa Bint Maktoum**

United Arab Emirates, b. 1989

*Oral Tradition*, 2014

Mixed media, 62 x 100 cm

Collection of Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah





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## Middle East Initiative Annual Report 2024

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The Middle East Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School is dedicated to advancing public policy in the Middle East by convening the world's foremost academic and policy experts, developing the next generation of leaders, and promoting community engagement on campus and in the region.

