



# The Future of the Middle East

03 December 2024

# AGENDA

SCAN the QR code to  
access the conference  
webpage



09.30 - 09.45

**Registration**

09.45 - 10.00

**Welcome and  
Opening Remarks**

**Professor Simon Mabon**, SEPAD Director  
**Alice Copland**, Foreign Policy Centre

10.00 - 10.20

**Keynote Speech**

*To be announced*

10.20 - 10.30

*Short Break*

10.30 - 11.45

**Session One**

*Order and disorder in a context of global instability:  
where do things stand in December 2024?*

11.45 - 12.00

*Break*

12.00- 13.15

**Session Two**

*Examining conflict, cooperation and co-  
existence in the Gulf-MENA region*

13.15- 14.15

*Lunch*

14.15- 15.30

**Session Three**

*Human (in)security in the Gulf-MENA region:  
understanding and addressing new and emerging  
threats in a context of crisis*

15.30- 15.45

*Break*

15.45- 17.00

**Session Four**

*Political agency and expression: the role of  
individuals in shaping the future of the Gulf-MENA  
region*

17.00- 17.15

**Closing Remarks**

## Session One

### Order and disorder amidst global instability: where do things stand in December 2024?

*The Middle East is in a period of profound instability, with **tensions escalating** and the risk of full-scale regional conflict seemingly ever-present. In this context, traditional sources of ‘order’ - whether external states or institutions - have appeared unable to respond. This panel will examine the **geopolitical context** and **diplomatic landscape** in the region, discussing the role of traditional and new actors. The **implications of a second Trump Presidency** and how the UK should approach the region through its foreign policy will be explored.*

#### Speakers include

**Sir William Patey**, former British Ambassador to Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Sudan and Chair of the Labour Middle East Council;  
**Jasmine El Gamal**, former Middle East advisor at the Pentagon and consultant on international affairs and national security;  
**Professor Raihan Ismail**, Professor of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Oxford University;  
**Aziz Alghashian**, SEPAD project fellow and Saudi researcher.

## Session Two

### Examining conflict, cooperation and co-existence in the MENA region

*At a time of profound **regional instability**, with seemingly little hope for **cooperation** and **coexistence** amongst rival actors this session reflects on how state and non-state actors have engaged with rivals in cooperative and/or combative ways. In doing so, speakers will draw on examples from the recent past to consider what mechanisms have **proved successful**, what lessons can be learned, and how the UK and other institutions can engage in conflict-settings most effectively.*

#### Speakers include

**Professor Simon Mabon**, Professor of International Politics and Director of the SEPAD project, University of Lancaster;  
**Elly Nott**, Co-Founder of the Nott Foundation.  
Others tbc.



The **Sectarianism, Proxies and De-sectarianisation (SEPAD)** project based at Lancaster University’s Richardson Institute is a collaborative project aimed at understanding the conditions that give rise to sectarian violence and proxy conflicts along religious lines with the aim of creating space for a ‘desectarianisation’ of socio-political life. Formed in 2018 through a generous grant from Carnegie Corporation, it is currently in its second phase. For more information scan the QR code or visit [www.sepad.org.uk](http://www.sepad.org.uk)

## Session Three

### Human (in)security in the MENA region: drivers of violence and challenges to human development

Global and regional instability has a catastrophic impact on individuals' lives and unresolved armed conflicts have severe **implications for human development**. In the MENA region a range of threats, including **environmental, economic and health inequalities**, pose a profound challenge. In this panel, speakers will explore **human insecurity** in a context of crisis and how this could be addressed by the UK through its foreign and development policy, by multilateral institutions such as the UN and World Bank, and through regional alliances.

#### Speakers include

**Anna Chernova**, Senior Policy Advisor, Oxfam and Foreign Policy Centre Senior Research Fellow;  
**Alex Ballinger**, Member of Parliament from Halesowen.  
Others tbc.

## Session Four

### Political agency and expression: the role of individuals in shaping the future of the Middle East

*Despite the many challenges posed by the **rising violence across 2024**, people across the region continue to exert political agency and seek to enact change. This session will look at how citizens exert **free expression** and **drive change** as well as how the voices of those on the ground, including **grassroots activists** and **journalists**, can be central to imagining the future of the region.*

#### Speakers include

**Dr Tahirih Danesh**, FPC Senior Advisor, Lecturer in Human Rights Law and Executive Director of the Persia Educational Foundation;  
**Dr Ibrahim Halawi**, Lecturer in International Politics, Royal Holloway University;  
**Mahsa Alimardani**, Senior MENA Programme Officer at ARTICLE 19.

**Chaired by: Fiona O'Brien**, Director of London Bureau, Reporters Without Borders.



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