



Arab Reform Initiative

Second Annual Environmental
Politics Conference

Towards a Just Environmental Transition in the Middle East and North Africa

 **May 31st - June 1st, 2022**

 In person, Gefinor Rotana Hotel, Beirut, Lebanon

 Live on Zoom and Facebook Live

Towards a Just Environmental Transition in the Middle East and North Africa

How do the environmental and climate crises intersect with social inequality in the Middle East and North Africa? How do we root environmental and climate debates within the region in social justice and equity concerns?

The concept of Just Transition has become a keystone of the post-Paris Climate Agreement policy world, while many activists and frontline communities claim that it has lost its original meaning. With the next two Conference of Parties (COP) meetings taking place in the MENA – COP27 in Egypt and COP28 in the UAE – how do global debates over Just Environmental Transitions play in the region? What do just transition in energy, food systems, waste and water management mean for populations across the region? And is this an adequate framework for organizing ecological solidarity and activism in MENA?

ARI's second annual conference of its Environmental Politics Program convenes activists, researchers, and practitioners on the frontlines of environmental and climate action in MENA to discuss the visions, strategies, tensions, and contradictions around what just environmental transitions entail.

About the Environmental Politics Program

ARI's Environmental Politics Program approaches the environment not simply as a set of natural resources, but also as a shared public space, a domain of public health, and an arena of political economy; inseparable from MENA's broader political and economic discussions. The program brings together a network of scholars, practitioners, and activists to create an ecological community of practice, through four key activity areas:

- Understanding and supporting environmental activism in MENA
- Analyzing national-level governance structures and advocating for change
- Highlighting and promoting local initiatives
- Environment in conflict

The program aims to share new ways of thinking about the environmental conditions of the Arab region, to foster networks between activists, to showcase local experiences contending with environmental injustice, and identify critical locations and margins of maneuver for change.

Day 1: May 31, 2022

9:30 - 10:00 am

Welcome & Introductions

Nadim Houry

Sarine Karajerjian

Executive Director of Arab Reform Initiative

Program Director of Environmental Politics at Arab Reform Initiative

10:00 - 11:30 am

Just Transition, a Framework for Coalition-Building in MENA?

Since the concept of Just Transition first emerged in the 1970s, a growing number of projects around the world have emerged to build alliances between labor movements and disparate social and environmental justice movements and organizations – as well as to argue that addressing environmental catastrophe in isolation from social and economic structures are false solutions. What can the experiences of struggles around the world teach us? And what can the different Arab contexts contribute to the global discussion? To what extent is Just Transition a unifying framework for activism in MENA? What are the possibilities and limitations in the regional context? What are current and potential trans-movement and transregional solidarities?



Moderated by **Julia Choucair-Vizoso**

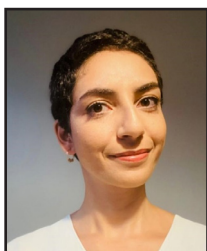
Julia Choucair Vizoso is a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at the Arab Reform Initiative and Editor at The Public Source. She is also Adjunct Professor of International Relations at IE University in Madrid. She holds a PhD in Political Science from Yale University and an M.A. in Arab Studies/B.S. in Foreign Service from Georgetown University.

Speakers:



Ali Aznague

Ali Aznague is an activist and researcher from Morocco, and coordinator for Siyada North African Food Sovereignty Network.



Farah Daibes

Farah Daibes is the Senior Program Manager at Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Political Feminism Program in the MENA region. Through her work, she focuses on integrating feminist perspectives into regional discussions related to socio-economic and political challenges with the aim to build alternative feminist solutions to the most pressing issues facing the region.



Katie Sandwell

Katie Sandwell is a Senior Project Officer with the Transnational Institute, an international activist think tank head-quartered in Amsterdam. Her work focuses especially on land and resource justice, food sovereignty, oceans, and just transition. Katie holds a Master of Environmental Studies degree from York University, Canada focusing on food sovereignty and local food movements. She has lived in Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands and has been involved with a range of food, community, environmental, and social justice organisations.

Sarmad Amjad

Transformative Justice Project Coordinator and International Organisation Representative in Iraq

12:00 - 1:30 pm

Water (In)Justice: A problem of scarcity or equity?

The MENA region is the most water-scarce in the world, facing the brunt of water insecurity in the face of conflict, climate change, and resource extraction. Despite these factors, water governance continues to favor economic interests over equity and adaptive practices. What are the barriers to equitable water governance in the Arab region, and what policies are needed to ensure both the restoration of water resources and rightful access to them?



Moderated by Jamil Mouawad

Jamil Mouawad is a Senior Fellow at the Arab Reform Initiative in charge of the COVID-19 and social justice project in the Arab world and the independent professional associations project in the Arab world. He is also a lecturer in politics at the American University of Beirut, where he teaches courses in Public Policy, Political Science and Lebanese politics. He holds a PhD in politics from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. He is a former Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute, Florence. Jamil is a founding member of the Beirut School for Critical Security Studies, and the coordinator of the Ethics in Social sciences project initiated by the Arab Council for Social Sciences (ACSS).

Speakers:



Musaed Aklan

Musaed Aklan is a civil engineer and researcher in the field of water and environment. He has 15 years of professional and academic experiences. He worked with a number of official institutions, universities, and international organizations and has published number of scientific papers that focused on current water crisis, sustainable solutions and the development of indigenous water systems. He holds a master degree in IWRM from Cologne University, Germany. Directly after MSc graduation, Aklan managed and coordinated two development projects (KFW, UN - DESA) just before he joined IHE-Delft as a PhD research fellow in Land and Water Management department, where he was nominated as a member of PhD Association Board (PAB).



Maha Yassin

Maha Yassin is a Junior Research Fellow at the Clingendael Institute. Her work focuses on awareness-raising via policy research and outreach on climate security nexus in Iraq, and the wider Middle East region. Maha is in charge of outreach of the Planetary Security Initiative. She is also in charge of the effort of this initiative to set up a climate security and peace forum among local environmental and climate stakeholders across the country.



Hussam Hawwa

Hussam Hawwa holds a BSc. in Agricultural Sciences and Engineering Diploma from the American University of Beirut, as well as a MSc. in Rural Development Studies with a minor in Integrated Water Resources Management from Wageningen University, Netherlands. He has complemented his studies with over 12 years of experience in conducting, managing, and assessing projects in the water and environment sectors; collaborating with international NGOs, donors, government, water establishments, municipalities, and local communities across Lebanon and around the Mediterranean region. Hussam is the founder and current CEO of Difaf SAL, an environmental engineering and consultancy company based in Lebanon. Difaf projects address water issues, pollution, environmental impact assessments, sustainable agriculture, ecological restoration, and environmental policy. Representing Difaf, Hussam has provided technical and business development trainings for farmers, students, and environmental entrepreneurs, participated in many seminars and workshops dealing with water issues, and has been invited as a speaker at notable events such as Beirut Water Week, IUCN – World Conservation Congress.



Yasser Souilmi

Yasser is a natural resource management engineer and project manager at Houloul. He is active in civil society that defends human rights and good governance, and the winner of the National Award for Best Innovation in Waste recovery in 2016 and co-founder (COO) of FarmVie.

2:30 - 4:00 pm

Towards Just Agricultural Transitions and Food Sovereignty in MENA

The agricultural sector has transformed in MENA in the past decades, with agricultural workers and rural communities becoming more impoverished while the goal of food sovereignty is more distant than ever. What are the sustainable alternatives to the current regional food systems? What does shifting the framework from food security to food sovereignty entail? How can the region rewrite its food policies? What can we learn from existing but marginalized alternatives at the local level?



Moderated by Farah Al-Shami

Farah Al Shami is a Research Fellow at the Arab Reform Initiative. Her work focuses on Arab Youth Trajectories in Contexts of Conflict; Social Protection in the Post-Covid19 Era in the Arab Region; and the Role of New Labour Movements in Transitions in Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan and Algeria; among others. Prior to working at ARI, she was a Program/s Officer and Junior Researcher at the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), the United Nations-Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), and the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship at the American University of Beirut (AUB).

Speakers:



Nada Trigui

Nada Trigui is a Tunis-based political economist graduated from Tunis Business School. She co-founded OSAE (Observatory for Food Sovereignty and Environment) in 2017, worked with the Action Group of Food Sovereignty and managed the implementation in 2020/2021 of “Réseau Nourriture Citoyenne”, a partnership between consumers and producers for the transition to agroecology, with Tunisian Permaculture Association. She worked as parliament observer with AlBawsala (parliament monitoring NGO), journalist with Barr Al Aman research media, and worked on issues related to transitional justice, social and economic justice, food sovereignty and consumer organizing as well as social movements. She joined the team of the Tunisian Observatory for Economy in 2022.



Medani Abbas Medani Mohamed

Medani Abbas Medani is the former Minister of Industry and Trade (Sudan), and the current director of the Sudanese Development Call “Nidaa”. He is also a member of the Coordination Council for development.



Omar Tesdell

Omar Tesdell is assistant professor in the Department of Geography and studies landscape and agroecological transformation in the Eastern Mediterranean. His peer-reviewed research has been published in refereed journals such as: *Plants, People, Planet* (2020), *Frontiers in Plant Science* (2020), *Journal of Arid Environments* (2020), *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems* (2019), *Geoforum* (2017), and *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (2015). He has published with a team, in Arabic, an article on the Makaneyyat group's methodology (2022). He has also edited an Arabic-English guide titled *Palestinian Wild Food Plants*, 2018 (CC licensed e-book) as part of a community-based research collective. Other recent publications include "Garden Gathering" in *A Garden Among the Hills: The Floral Heritage of Palestine*, The Palestinian Museum (2019). He holds a Ph.D. in Geography and Sustainable Agriculture from the University of Minnesota and was a postdoctoral fellow at Columbia University in New York in 2015.



Rami Zurayk

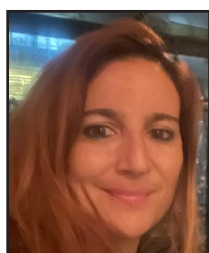
Dr. Rami Zurayk is a professor and director at the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS). He was a member of the Steering Committee of the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) of the Committee of World Food Security (CFS), and a commissioner on the EAT-Lancet commission on sustainable diets from sustainable food systems. He has worked and written extensively on the Arab World, focusing on the political ecology of Arab food security and its linkages with the agrarian question.

Day 2: June 1, 2022

10:00 - 11:30 am

Energy Transitions in the Gulf: Internal and external implications

The particularities of the hydrocarbon-dependent political economies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) raise critical questions about how they will adjust to changing global energy markets and what the repercussions will be beyond their borders. Internally, growing populations and a rentier social contract built on revenues from fossil fuels imply severe potential social impacts from energy transitions. Regionally, as the wealthiest MENA states, the GCC countries are the largest carbon emitters in MENA and also the best equipped to avoid the worst effects of climate change – raising questions about how environmental harms are distributed.



Moderated by **Sarine Karajerjian**

Sarine Karajerjian is the Program Director of the Environmental Politics program at the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI). Prior to working at ARI, she worked for 15 years at the AUB's Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs since the Institute's inception. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Anthropology at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris and writing her dissertation on the exile and trauma of Syrian refugee women in Beirut. She holds a Masters' degree in Environmental Policy Planning and a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Health from AUB.

Speakers:



Crystal Ennis

Crystal A. Ennis is a scholar of global political economy and University Lecturer in Political Economy of the Middle East at Leiden University, The Netherlands. Her research examines labour and migration governance, job seeking and economic belonging, and the political economy of dependency on hydrocarbon revenue and foreign labour in Gulf economies. Crystal recently co-edited *The South Asia to Gulf Migration Governance Complex* (Bristol University Press 2022) with N. Blarel. Her publications have appeared in *New Political Economy*, *Global Social Policy*, *Third World Quarterly*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, and *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, among others.



Mohammad Al-Saidi

Dr. Mohammad Al-Saidi is an assistant professor of public policy in the Department of International Affairs at Qatar University. He has worked on projects and published papers on Yemen, the Gulf, East Africa, and Jordan on issues ranging from development and the environment to water resources, management, and sustainable transitions.



Camille Ammoun

Camille Ammoun studied political science and economics. As a policy advisor in sustainable urban development for ten years, he has concentrated his efforts on promoting climate action within the government of Dubai. Camille has recently relocated to Beirut where he works on policy projects with various local and international organizations. He also teaches a graduate course on climate change economics and urban environment at the Université Saint-Joseph's Economics Department. In his writings, he explores ways to address urban issues through literature.



Manal Shehabi

Dr. Manal Shehabi is an applied economist with recognized expertise energy, economic, and resource sustainability in resource exporters, focusing on the Middle East. She is an Academic Visitor at St. Antony's College, Oxford University, and Founding Director of SHEER Research & Advisory. She is also a Senior Research Fellow at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies and Research Associate of Economic Research Forum. She publishes in high-impact journals, books, and policy reports. Her research offers important contributions to understanding and modeling energy and economic sustainability and policy alternative in Gulf hydrocarbon economies following the energy transition and hydrocarbon price volatility. This research examines areas of hydrogen and decarbonization, economic diversification, subsidy reform, expatriate labor, oligopoly rents and policy alternatives. Impacts of her research on policy include constructing an economic model for policymaking in Kuwait; reviewing Kuwait's national hydrogen strategy; conducting capacity building to policymakers; and serving as an expert with the UNFCCC.

12:00 - 1:30 pm

Just Energy Transitions: Moving away from fossil fuels in North Africa

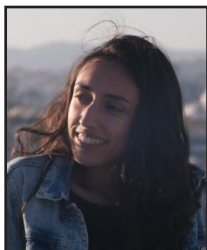
North Africa is a region with significant potential for the expansion of renewable energy sources. As we see a surge in renewable energy projects, critics and residents of the lands where these projects are sited worry they might reproduce the economic and political inequalities inherent in fossil fuel extraction. What are the current and expected material impacts of renewable energy projects in North Africa? Who is most affected and how? What does working towards a just energy transition entail?



Moderated by Malek Lakhal

Malek Lakhal is a Tunisian researcher and journalist. Her research focuses on citizenship, social movements, civil society organisations, and feminism. Prior to working at the Arab Reform Initiative, she was a journalist at Nawaat and a research assistant at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She holds a master's degree in Political Theory from Sciences Po Paris.

Speakers:



Aïda Delpuech

Aïda Delpuech is a freelance journalist based in Tunis. Passionate about ecology, she mostly covers and investigates themes related to the environment, agriculture, pollution, and agri-food. In November 2021, Aïda was selected to cover the COP26 negotiations in Glasgow for the media outlet Inkyfada with the help of a grant from the Earth Journalism Network and the Stanley Center for Peace and Security.



Atman Aoui

Born in a tent from a nomadic family, Atman Aoui is the only one of his 14 brothers and sisters who had the chance to go to school. By deploying great efforts, he was able to obtain a Master's degree in earth sciences and a computer technician diploma, which gave him the chance to access employment. He discovered mediation through contacts with communities in conflict, and is a facilitator of training and reflection workshops. As President of the Association for the Promotion of Mediation in Morocco and member of the administrative board of ae-centre Switzerland, he is aware of mediation's difficulty as a process and toolbox, and has undergone extensive training in this area. He is also an educator and human rights activist.



Ilyes Ben Ammar

Member of the working group for energy democracy (Tunisian Platform of Alternatives) and trade unionist

Rabie Wahba

Regional Coordinator at International Land Coalition

2:30 - 4:00 pm

| Waste Management: What are the needed reforms?

Urban growth and the increase of consumption rates in the MENA region create an ever-growing quantity of household waste and especially plastic waste, that do not get reused or recycled and end up in landfills or uncontrolled dump sites. What are alternative models of integrated and sustainable waste management that are socially inclusive and equitable?



Moderated by **Zied Boussen**

Zied Boussen is a Tunisian activist and researcher on governance, public policies and human rights. His research focuses on institutional and legal reforms in transitional contexts. He holds a master's degree in International Law with a focus on post-conflict state-building and reconstruction from the University of Aix-Marseille, France.

Speakers:



Leen Sraj

Environmental consultant with over 6 years of experience in solid waste management including setting up the “Yalla Return” product in Lebanon; planning waste studies and infrastructure design for Nadeera projects; preparation of solid waste management plans for major developments, infrastructure and industrial facilities, including all waste management components; extensive experience in solid waste management systems, including solid waste generation rates/compositions for various communities and industries, storage/collection and disposal methods; expertise in design of storage areas for different types of generated solid waste; and experience in Estidama and GSAS in relation to Solid Waste Management.



Mohamad Kamal

Mohamed Kamal is a Public Health Engineer with expertise in Solid Waste Management and Plastic Pollution. He is the current Co-director of Greenish, an organization that works on environmental awareness, education and advocacy. Mohamed has been actively working on plastic pollution related projects in Egypt for the past 4 years, specifically quantification and mapping of mismanagement of plastics across the country.



Nadine Wahab

Nadine Wahab established Sustainable Network Egypt to bring together organizations, social enterprises and individuals who are working to reduce single use plastic waste in Egypt. She is also the Founder of Eco-Dahab, a sustainable destination management organisation in Dahab, South Sinai. Eco-Dahab has worked closely with Dahab City Council, the South Sinai Governor's office and the Ministry of Environment to promote sustainable development in South Sinai. In collaboration with the several organizations and local community, Eco-Dahab was able to push the Governor to sign a decree banning single use plastic in 2019. Prior to founding Eco-Dahab, Nadine worked with several international civil society organizations, where she focused on civic engagement with policy makers on several sustainable development goals. Nadine is a Scuba Diver and a Free diver who raises three dogs and works to protect all the street dogs of Dahab.

Day 3: June 2, 2022

CLOSED WORKSHOP:

Strengthening Ecological Communities of Practice in MENA

Building on the presentations and open discussions of the first two days, this closed workshop convenes journalists, researchers, and activists to facilitate the exchange of information, perspectives, and knowledge on the following questions:

- What are the primary challenges of working on environmental and climate issues in MENA? To what extent are these challenges shared or context-dependent?
- What are some current strategies and modes of action to face these challenges?
- What have been the most successful national campaigns and coalitions around environmental issues? What can we learn from them?
- What is the state of cross-national networks of collaboration? How can they be improved? What is missing?
- How can we increase access to and dissemination of reliable, locally-produced knowledge on the environment?
- How can we nurture communities of practice, to come together to share ideas, experiences and best practice and support each other?

The aim of the workshop is to:

- Allow for an exchange of experiences on environmental advocacy;
- Facilitate cross-country and cross-sector learning experiences;
- Promote regional networking.

10:00 - 12:30 am

Part I: Breakout Groups: Sharing Cases and Lessons

Participants will meet in smaller groups to discuss their own personal experiences mobilizing, advocating, documenting, or researching specific local or national campaigns and projects.

12:00 - 2:00 pm

Part II: Brainstorming: Models of Collaboration

This final session will brainstorm models of collaboration. What might a community of practice look like? What are potential examples from other contexts/regions? What do you need from this community of practice and network and what is the strategy that we could work on or adopt?

About the Arab Reform Initiative

The Arab Reform Initiative is the leading independent Arab think tank working with expert partners in the Middle East and North Africa and beyond to articulate a home-grown agenda for democratic change. It conducts research and policy analysis and provides a platform for inspirational voices based on the principles of diversity, impartiality and social justice.

- We produce original research informed by local experiences and partner with institutions to achieve impact across the Arab world and globally
- We empower individuals and institutions to develop their own concept of policy solutions
- We mobilize stakeholders to build coalitions for positive change

Our aim is to see vibrant democratic societies emerge and grow in the region. Founded in 2005, the Arab Reform Initiative is governed by a Plenary of its members and an Executive Committee.



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