

Hybrid event

The future of popular mobilisation in the Middle East and North Africa: Insights from 10 years of struggle

21 SEPTEMBER 2021
10:00 - 17:30 CEST

Working language: English

Ten years after the start of protests in the Middle East and North Africa, the process of grassroots mobilisation demanding a substantial change of the status quo continues. Over the last decade, Arab squares have been witnessing the emergence and transformation of popular resistance movements, as well as national governments' responses against the backdrop of an increasingly conflictual geopolitical context in the broader region.

*The joint **IAI-ECFR-CeSPI project** "10 years of protests in the Middle East and North Africa. Dynamics of mobilisation in a complex (geo)political environment" has analysed the local, national and international dimensions of the last decade of protests in the Middle East and North Africa by focussing on the case studies of Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. Coming to its conclusion and drawing on its comparative findings, the final conference of the project now looks at the future of the uprisings, posing new questions for further debate on this important theme:*

How have mobilisation processes across the Middle East and North Africa been speaking to each other in the last decade? What do the different protest movements' hopes and strategies tell us about present and future challenges to political change in the different countries and at the regional level? What are the perspectives and perceptions from the squares concerning ongoing political dynamics, external cooperation and the future of the region?

Benefiting from the insights of experts who directly took part in the research effort as well as researchers and activists who joined the protests, the final conference of the project will provide an opportunity to look at the future of popular mobilisation in the Middle East and North Africa by critically analysing mobilisation dynamics in the region and exploring perspectives of activists in selected national contexts and the broader region.

With the support of



Ministero degli Affari Esteri
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AGENDA

MORNING SESSION:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAqce-hrTIsH92Rfml-71oXLBILXdBfxdO5>
(pre-registration link on Zoom platform)

9:30 *Welcome Coffee*

10:00 **OPENING REMARKS**

LUCIO DEMICHELE, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

10:05 **PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND THE WAY FORWARD**

DANIELA HUBER, Istituto Affari Internazionali-IAI

ARTURO VARVELLI, European Council on Foreign Relations-ECFR

DANIELE FRIGERI, Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale-CeSPI

10:15 **KEYNOTE SPEECH**

JOSEPH BAHOUT, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut

10:30 **SESSION 1 — MOBILISATION PATTERNS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA, TEN YEARS ON**

This session delves into the analysis of popular mobilisation processes in Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Algeria and Tunisia, by investigating continuities and discontinuities as well as similarities and differences within and among popular struggles across the region. The discussion will be complemented by insights from the project's comparative research paper.

Chair: **ANDREA DESSI**, IAI

SPEAKERS:

HAFSA HALAWA, Independent Consultant*

MATTIA GIAMPAOLO, CeSPI

FRANCESCA CARUSO, IAI

THEODORE MURPHY, ECFR*

AURORA IANNI, CeSPI

DISCUSSANT:

NAWEL BELAKHDAR, Freie Universität Tunisia*

Q&A

12:30-14:30

Break

AFTERNOON SESSION:

<https://eu01web.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5cvc-yhqjotHtCRuucJH2HsGmfrL8MkH5Yi>
(registration link on Zoom platform)

14:30 **SESSION 2 — YOUTH FORUM - NEXT GENERATION MENA: EXPLORING THE POWER OF CHANGE**

14:45 **Panel 1** - *New voices from the squares: A call for civil rights and freedom from the MENA region*

Calls for civil rights and freedoms in the MENA region have been increasing and taking new shape throughout the last decade, involving new kinds of social movements and forms of activism. When exploring this evolution, it is crucial to enquire its connection with the broader protest movements in the region, to understand whether the waves of uprisings that have been shaking MENA squares might have been a wake-up call for louder and more diverse claims (such as, but not limited to, those linked with gender equality and gender based discrimination), while also contextualizing the latter in the broader socio-political and cultural frameworks of the different countries of the region. Furthermore, the relevance of the online dimension has increasingly created new digital spaces for expression, especially for minorities and social categories which might have difficulties in making their voices heard in the national and regional socio-political environments.

What is next for activism at the national and regional level? Which rights and freedoms are activists calling for? Will their struggle for change be heard?

Chair: **SILVIA COLOMBO**, IAI

SPEAKERS :

HAYDER AL SHAKERI, Chatham House*

GEORGES FAHMI, European University Institute*

CARMEN GEHA, American University of Beirut and ECFR MENA*

LUCILLE GRIFFON, EuroMed Rights

ASMA KHALIFA, GIGA Institute

16:00 **Panel 2** - *The chance of digitalisation: Matching socio-economic growth and youth empowerment in the MENA region*

Digitalisation is increasingly emerging as a path towards a more resilient and sustainable future for the MENA region – one where countries in the area could draw on their extremely young populations to launch new patterns of socio-economic growth. A well-thought and comprehensive strategy of digital transformation could contribute to solving some of the most endemic issues affecting the MENA region, such as youth unemployment and gender gap in the job market, while also offering new perspectives for the post-Covid recovery. In this framework, it is crucial to understand how governments in the region – helped by international institutions and organizations and namely by the EU – could positively promote

digitalisation in their country with the aim of empowering youth and improving current socio-economic conditions.

Chair: **LORENA STELLA MARTINI**, ECFR

SPEAKERS:

ALI AL-MAWLAWI, Inside Iraqi Politics*

TIN HINANE EL KADI, LSE*

ALEXANDRA LABAN, Société Française de Réalisation, d'Etudes et de Conseil-SOFRECO

MANUEL LANGENDORF, Independent researcher & journalist

KHADEJA RAMALI, ECFR MENA*

ŽILVINAS ŠVEDKAUSKAS, Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen and ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius

17:15 **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

ALFREDO CONTE, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

17:30 End of Conference

***online**