



**Swedish Dialogue Institute**  
for the Middle East and North Africa

List of Activities  
June 2024 – June 2025

# Introduction

The reporting period (June 2024 – June 2025) was marked by turbulence across the MENA region. The already extreme humanitarian situation in Gaza continued to deteriorate despite a two-month ceasefire and the exchange of hostages and prisoners in January–March. Direct hostilities between Iran and Israel took place in September 2024 and again over a longer stretch in June 2025. A ceasefire agreement was reached between Lebanon and Israel in November 2024. In December, the Assad regime was overthrown by a coalition of opposition forces led by *Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham* (HTS). Since then, Syria's bumpy road towards a peaceful and inclusive, political and economic transition has become a priority for the international community, culminating in the lifting of sanctions by the US, Europe and others in May–June 2025.

Throughout the year, Saudi Arabia assumed an increasingly prominent role as a mediator and host for regional and international diplomatic efforts on conflicts including Israel–Palestine and Ukraine. Qatar continued to spearhead efforts to secure a sustained ceasefire in Gaza, with active involvement from Egypt.

In parallel, 2025 marks the anniversaries of two landmark *UN Security Council resolutions: Women, Peace and Security* (30 years) and *Youth, Peace and Security* (15 years) as well as the 30th anniversary of the *Barcelona Process*, with ongoing consultations to develop a new *Pact for the Mediterranean* under the EU's Neighbourhood Policy. Though offering a shared platform for dialogue on peace and security between our two regions opportunity to deepen the cooperation and implementation of these platform have been overshadowed by the ongoing invasions and wars both Europe and the MENA-region. In general, there was a sense that global and regional actors turned away from rules-based solutions and consistent application of international humanitarian law and human rights.

Against this backdrop, the *Swedish Dialogue Institute* (SDI) has continued its core work on EU–MENA relations, youth and women's inclusion in peace and security, and intercultural dialogue. Particular attention has been given to developments in Syria and to initiatives supporting a peaceful and inclusive political and economic transition. SDI has also expanded its engagement with the Arab Gulf states — especially Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE — by conducting visits to Riyadh and Doha to explore future opportunities for cooperation. Given the dire situation in Gaza and the lack of progress in the Israel-Palestine peace process, SDI has also visited Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to connect with potential partners there.

Two themes prioritised by Sweden and Europe have shaped SDI's activities during 2024–2025, *Green Transition* and the *Role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Peacebuilding*. Both areas engage public and private actors alike, offering broad and forward-looking opportunities for dialogue and cooperation between Europe and the MENA region. At the signature event of the year, SDI's annual conference, with more than 100 participants, the main themes were *Peace and Security in the MENA Region*, *Green Transition* and *Intercultural Dialogue*.

In spring 2025, SDI launched a new initiative: the *Mutual Mentorship Programme between Europe and MENA and Across Generations* (MMP). Following an open call, around 40 participants—selected from several hundred applicants—are now engaged in a year-long programme that combines online and in-person meetings. The mentorship pairs focus on topics such as EU–MENA relations, peace and security, intergenerational dialogue, green transition, as well as AI and peacebuilding. As a pilot initiative, the programme is under continuous assessment and may be extended beyond 2025 if shown to be an effective tool for strengthening EU–MENA dialogue.

Alongside these initiatives, SDI has carried out a wide range of other activities aligned with Swedish and EU's interests, particularly in the field of intercultural dialogue. A full account of activities undertaken during 2024–2025 follows below.

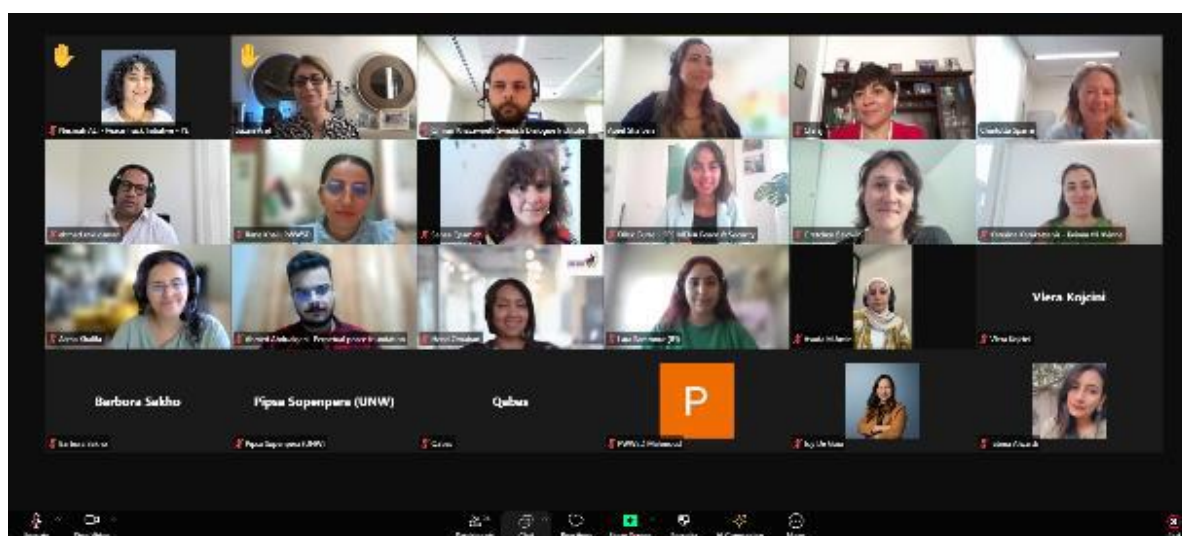
## Activities in June 2024

### First Working Group Meeting for the Arab States on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

On 5 and 6 June, SDI hosted the first meeting of the so-called *Working Group for the Arab states on WPS*. This was the first of a series of meetings aimed at producing a white paper to be shared with the international community as a way of including voices from the MENA region in the preparations for the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2025. The group is led by the Beirut-based Issam Fares Institute (IFI) and the UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS).

### Online Meeting on the Role of Media in Relation to Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

On 26 June, SDI hosted an online session exploring the role of media in raising awareness on women, peace, and security. The session included a panel of media experts, followed by an open discussion with members engaged in WPS-activities across the region.



## Activities in August 2024

### High-Level Forum on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)

SDI co-organised a side session during the High-Level Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) in Amman. The seminar addressed regional priorities for advancing youth inclusion in peacebuilding processes on intergenerational and intercultural dialogue. It also marked the launch of the

regional strategy on YPS. The session was organised in partnership with the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) and UNDP Regional Programme for Arab States (RBAS), alongside the League of Arab States and the Jordanian Ministry of Youth In connection to the forum, SDI held a



workshop for the MENA Coalition on YPS, aimed at developing practical recommendations for advancing the YPS agenda, including fostering inclusive approaches, enhancing regional cooperation, and promoting youth leadership.

## Activities in September 2024

### Staff planning days in Salt

On September 23–24, the Institute held staff planning days on the outskirts of Salt City in Jordan. Discussions covered regional developments, brainstorming of future activities, and reviewing work methods. The programme also included team-building exercises and a guided hike.



## Activities in October 2024

### Second Working Group Meeting for the Arab States on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

On 30 September – 2 October, SDI co-organised the second meeting of the WPS Working Group for the Arab States in Geneva. The meeting contributed to further developing the white paper encompassing Arab perspectives on WPS. As a contribution to the event, SDI and the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the UN co-hosted a reception in which the participants in the WPS group got to meet a network with counterparts from Geneva-based missions and organisations.



## Event on Digital Storytelling and Intercultural Dialogue in Gothenburg

On 17 October, SDI co-hosted a session on digital storytelling and intercultural dialogue as part of the *Celebrating Our Diversity Forum*. The event explored the role of digital media and art in fostering understanding and dialogue across cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The forum was organised by the *Anna Lindh Foundation* Swedish network and *The National Museum of World Culture*.



## Webinar on the Future of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

### Agenda

On 24 October, SDI co-hosted a webinar with the *Renaissance Strategic Centre (RSC)*, an independent think tank operating under the *Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD)* on the future of the WPS agenda in the Arab States, gathering over 50 WPS experts and practitioners from the region and Europe. Discussions focused on institutionalising National Action Plans (NAP), supporting civil society, and adapting global frameworks to regional contexts. The event took place during the UN WPS week.



## Activities in November 2024

### Online Meeting on AI and the Private Sector in Relation to Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

On 14 November, SDI hosted an online session on the role of the private sector in advancing the WPS agenda with a focus on AI, highlighting opportunities to use AI for documentation, monitoring, and empowering women on the ground, while addressing risks such as online harassment and algorithmic bias.



### Annual Conference:

### Investing in Dialogues for Peace and Sustainable Development

On 27 November, SDI hosted its annual conference in Amman, bringing together over 100 participants from the MENA region and Europe. Discussions focused on inclusive dialogue for peace and security, intercultural dialogue to counter polarisation, and green transitions as a driver for sustainable development. A pre-conference reception provided an opportunity for informal networking amongst participants.



### Advisory Committee Meeting

On 28 November, and following the conference, the SDI convened with its Advisory Committee in Amman to review key activities from 2024, reflect on lessons learned, and to set strategic priorities for 2025.

## Activities in December 2024

### Participation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Youth Empowerment Network online session

On 12 December, SDI took part as speaker and introduced the guidance note on intergenerational dialogue in an OECD-hosted online session on mainstreaming youth perspectives in decision-making, contributing perspectives from the MENA region and reaffirming its commitment to inclusive leadership and youth participation.

## Activities in January 2025

### Online Meeting on Syria and Political Inclusion

On 16 January, SDI hosted an online meeting on Syria on political inclusion following the collapse of the Assad regime. The platform brought together practitioners, analysts, and civil society representatives to share perspectives on prospects for inclusion of minorities and women in the processes to come.



### Visit to Doha

On 27–28 January, SDI visited Doha to hold a series of meetings with relevant Qatari counterparts and regional stakeholders. The discussions focused on recent regional developments and potential areas for future collaboration. SDI also participated in the third meeting of the *Working Group for the Arab States on WPS*. The programme was developed in close collaboration with the Swedish Embassy in Doha, which also took part in the meetings.



## Activities in February 2025

### Participation in the Launch of the Euro–MENA Initiative for Democracy and Development

On 25–26 February, SDI participated in the launch of the *Euro-MENA Initiative for Democracy and Development (ARDD Europe)*, held over two days with speakers and participants from across Europe and the MENA region. During the session “Rethinking Euro–MENA Relations”, Ann Måwe, Director of SDI, underscored the value of intergenerational dialogue and inclusive participation as key drivers of constructive engagement. SDI’s pilot initiative, the *Mutual Mentorship Programme*, was presented as an innovative methodology for strengthening EU–MENA dialogue.



## Activities in March 2025

### MENA Side-Event at Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

On 12 March, SDI co-hosted a side event at the *Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)* in New York and online, organised by UN Women *Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS)*. The event brought together international and regional experts to discuss key challenges and opportunities for advancing the WPS agenda.

### Panel on Faith and Peacebuilding

On 19 March, SDI organised an iftar gathering in Amman, followed by a panel discussion on faith and peacebuilding. The event explored the role of faith-based actors in peace processes and fostering dialogue, with participants from religious institutions, civil society, and diplomatic circles.

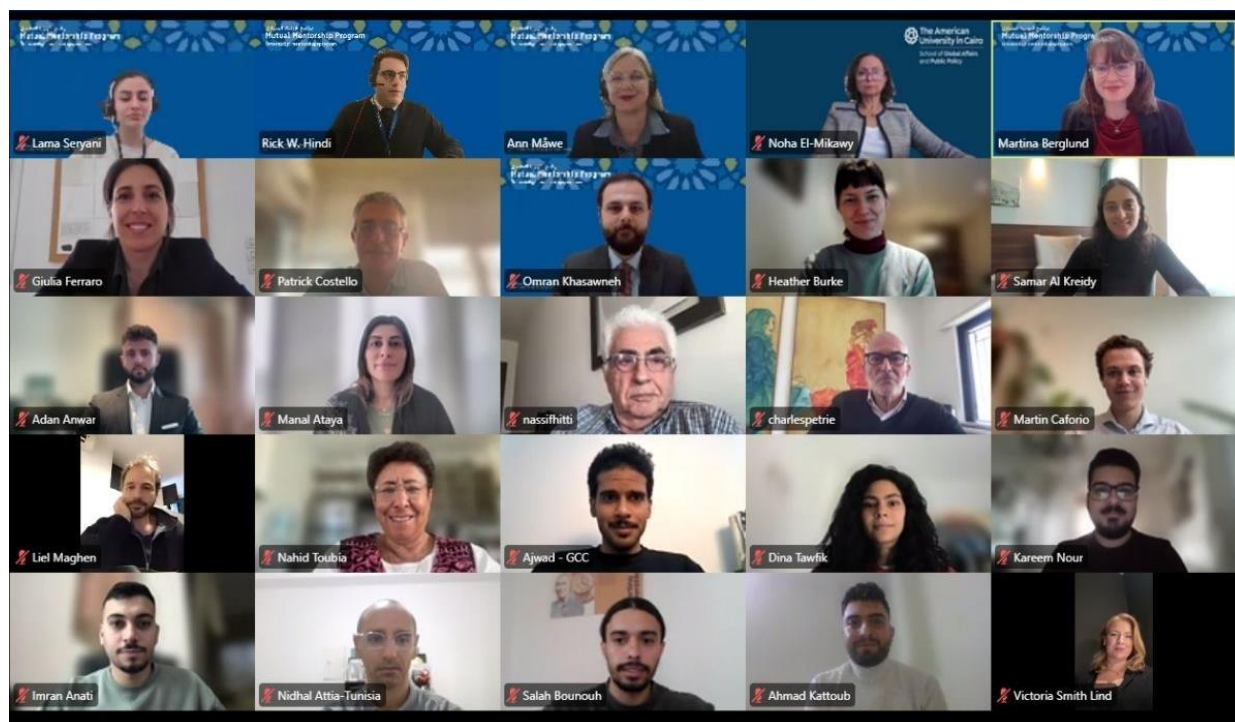


## Meetings with Israeli-Palestinian Civil Society Organisations

On 16–18 March, SDI carried out an exploratory visit to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv to engage with civil society organisations, with a particular focus on joint Israeli–Palestinian initiatives promoting peace, human rights, and people-to-people cooperation. The visit aimed to identify potential partners for future regional activities in the areas of peace and security as well as sustainable development, while also monitoring trends and opportunities for targeted initiatives supporting a peaceful resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The programme was developed in close collaboration with the Swedish Embassy in Tel Aviv, which also took part in the meetings.

## The First Mutual Mentorship Programme (MMP) Meeting

On 26 March, SDI launched the EU-MENA *Mutual Mentorship Programme* (MMP). The online event outlined the programme’s objectives and structure, provided a platform for participants’ initial exchanges, and centred on the theme of EU–MENA relations.



## Activities in April 2025

### Panel and Reception on Syria, Palestine and Yemen with EU Representatives from the UN Mission in New York

On 8 April, SDI hosted a panel discussion and reception in Amman focusing on key developments in Syria, Palestine, and Yemen. The event provided an opportunity for EU Member State MENA experts in New York to hear perspectives from the region and engage directly in dialogue with them.



### The Second Mutual Mentorship Programme Meeting (MMP)

On 15 April, SDI convened the second session of the EU-MENA *Mutual Mentorship Programme* (MMP) online, providing a platform for mutual mentors to reflect on progress, share experiences, and continue building connections and intergenerational and intercultural dialogue. The meeting focused on intergenerational themes.

### Visit to Riyadh

On 26-29 April, SDI held a series of meetings in Riyadh, discussing the regional developments in general and the green transition plans in particular. Preparations for a planned regional conference on this theme were also initiated. The programme was developed in close collaboration with the Swedish Embassy in Riyadh, which also took part in the meetings.



## Activity on democratic governance with Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)

On 30 April, SDI hosted a reception in connection with SKR/SALAR's regional conference, creating a platform for Jordan-based counterparts to engage with participants from Morocco, Libya, Algeria, and Syria, as well as with representatives of the international community based in Amman.



## Activities in May 2025

### Regional Communicators' Meeting

On 5-6 May, SDI hosted a regional communicators' meeting in Amman. The meeting provided an opportunity for communication professionals from Swedish embassies in the region to exchange best practices, align messaging, and strengthen networks. The meeting was further used to launch the new communication plan and visual identity of the Swedish MFA under the name *UD ID 2.0*. The programme of the meeting was organised together with UD-KOM, UD-FH and the Swedish Institute (SI).



## Stockholm Forum Participation on Syria and AI

On 12–14 May, SDI took part in the *Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development*, where it co-hosted sessions on Syria’s political transition and on the role of artificial intelligence in peacebuilding.

During the visit, meetings were also held at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, allowing participants to connect with colleagues from various departments. The Forum concluded with an EU–



MENA-focused dinner that brought together *Team Sweden* representatives, conference speakers, and participants from the MENA Forum.

## Round of Meetings in Brussels

On 15-16 May 2025, SDI conducted a round of meetings in Brussels with EU counterparts, think tanks, and civil society actors to discuss the EU’s new pact for the Mediterranean, as well as developments in EU-MENA relations and explore future areas of cooperation. The programme was developed in close collaboration with the Swedish permanent representation to the EU.



## The Third Mutual Mentorship Programme (MMP) Meeting

On 19-20 May, SDI convened an in-person meeting of the Mutual Mentorship Programme (MMP) participants in Amman, providing a space for dialogue, exchange of experiences, and discussions on ongoing regional and thematic challenges. The in-person meeting was a prolonged MMP session with numerous participants who attended the event from the MENA region and Europe. In addition to the sessions and workshops, all the mentor pairs participated in intercultural activities across the city such as a graffiti tour and a visit to *Darat al Funun*, and even a cooking class.



## Activities in June 2025

### ALF Forum

On 17-19 June, travel disruptions kept the SDI team off the programme at the *Anna Lindh Foundation Forum* (ALForum) in Tirana. Even so, representatives from SDI's *Mutual Mentorship Programme* (MMP) took part as observers, joining sessions and exchanging ideas with civil society, academia and private sector actors from the Euro-Mediterranean region on dialogue, regional cooperation and sustainable development, particularly in the areas of green transition and AI.



## The Fourth Mutual Mentorship Programme (MMP) Meeting

On 30 June, SDI held the fourth meeting of the Mutual Mentorship Programme (MMP). The online session focused on *Storytelling in Practice* and brought together participants from across Europe and the MENA region, representing different generations and perspectives. Discussions highlighted storytelling as a tool for change and its far-reaching impact, combining reflections on digital storytelling with personal narratives shared by the participants.



## Conclusion

Over the course of June 2024 – June 2025, SDI has continued to navigate a rapidly changing regional and international landscape, marked by persistent conflict, political transitions, and opportunities for renewed dialogue. SDI has remained committed to fostering inclusive engagement, supporting peacebuilding efforts, and strengthening EU–MENA relations through a wide range of activities.

Key highlights of the year included the annual November Conference, and the launch of the *Mutual Mentorship Programme* (MMP), which strengthened partnerships across Europe, the Gulf, and the wider MENA region.

SDI will continue to build on these foundations by supporting inclusive political and economic transitions, deepening collaboration with regional partners, and advancing intercultural dialogue. In doing so, SDI remains dedicated to promoting peace, security, and sustainable development through dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding between Europe and the MENA region in line with Sweden's, as well as the European Union's priorities and interests.