



Swedish Dialogue Institute
for the Middle East and North Africa

Advisory Committee

2026-2028

H.E. Dr. Nassif Hitti (Lebanon)

Chairman



H.E. Dr. Nassif Hitti is a former Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants, having served in 2020. He spent several decades with the League of Arab States, including as Ambassador to France, UNESCO, Italy and the Holy See, and as Diplomatic Adviser to the Secretary-General of the Arab League. Dr Hitti also has extensive academic experience as a university professor and has published widely on international relations, foreign policy and Middle Eastern affairs. He is a regular contributor to Lebanese and Egyptian newspapers and a frequent visiting lecturer at universities, research centres and conferences. Dr Hitti holds a PhD in International Relations from the University of Southern California.

Mr. Roger Asfar (Syria)



Mr. Roger Asfar is the Syria Country Director at the Adyan Foundation, as well as a freelance researcher and journalist. Mr. Asfar's work focuses on human rights, diversity, refugees, minority issues, inclusive citizenship and political analysis related to Syria and Lebanon. He engages in research and public discourse that promotes pluralism, social cohesion and equitable civic participation.

Ms. Manal Ataya (United Arab Emirates)



Ms Manal Ataya is a museum professional and cultural strategist whose work explores the intersection of arts and culture, society and peacebuilding. Ms Ataya has over 20 years of senior leadership experience across the UAE and the wider region, with a focus on cultural policy, institutional development, cross-cultural dialogue, social cohesion, community wellbeing and cultural diplomacy. As Museums Advisor to His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah, she supports long-term cultural planning and advises on major cultural initiatives, governance and sector development. She previously served as Director General of Sharjah Museums Authority for 16 years. Ms Ataya also lectures regularly and serves on advisory boards in culture, heritage and higher education.

Mr. Patrick Costello (UK/EU)



Mr. Patrick Costello served as an EU official for 27 years, working across the European Parliament, European Commission and European External Action Service. Mr Costello held senior roles in several private offices, including those of Chris Patten, Margot Wallström, Josep Borrell and Karmenu Vella. His other positions included EEAS Head of Division for Democracy and Electoral Observation, Head of Division for the Middle East, and Deputy to the Chair of the Political and Security Committee. He began his career as a human rights campaigner and UN observer in Haiti and South Africa.

H.E. Dr. Rola A. A. H. Dashti (Kuwait)



H.E. Dr. Rola Dashti was appointed Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in 2019. Dr. Dashti is a leading Kuwaiti economist and long-standing advocate for women's rights and gender equality. She previously served as Kuwait's Minister for Planning and Development and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs from 2012 to 2014 and played a pivotal role in advancing women's political participation in Kuwait. Dr. Dashti has also held senior positions in research, financial and development institutions, including the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, the National Bank of Kuwait and the World Bank. She holds a PhD from Johns Hopkins University and a master's degree from California State University.

Dr. Mona Demaidi (Palestine)



Dr. Mona Nabil Demaidi is an AI expert, entrepreneur and academic leader recognised for her contributions to technology, education and policy. Dr. Demaidi serves as Vice President for Artificial Intelligence and Director of International Relations at Arab American University. She helped shape Palestine's Artificial Intelligence National Strategy and UNESCO's AI and Ethics Policy for Palestine, and works as a global AI trainer. Dr. Demaidi has also contributed to UN initiatives on AI, peacebuilding and the Women, Peace and Security agenda, including work on inclusive peace processes and digital threats. She is Founder and CEO of STEMpire and Vice Chair of Intersect Innovation Hub. Dr. Demaidi holds a master's degree from the University of Manchester and a PhD from the Birmingham City University.

Ms. Ellie Geranmayeh (UK)



Ellie Geranmayeh is a Senior Policy Fellow and Deputy Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at the European Council on Foreign Relations. Ms. Geranmayeh focuses on European policy towards Iran, particularly nuclear diplomacy, regional security and sanctions policy. She worked extensively on the diplomatic track that led to the 2015 nuclear deal and continues to brief senior policymakers on approaches to Iran's nuclear activities. Her research also covers wider regional dynamics, including de-escalation efforts between GCC states and Iran, and geopolitical trends in the Middle East. Ms Geranmayeh is regularly quoted by international media and appears on major news outlets as a commentator on Middle Eastern affairs.

Mr. Nadim Houry (Lebanon/France)



Mr. Nadim Houry is the Executive Director of the Arab Reform Initiative. Mr. Houry previously spent 13 years at Human Rights Watch, where he founded and led the Beirut office for a decade before serving as Director of the Terrorism and Counterterrorism Programme. His work has covered human rights issues across the MENA region, particularly in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan, including freedom of expression, abuses by security forces and labour rights. Mr. Houry has conducted extensive research in conflict zones and writes regularly on governance and accountability. A lawyer by training, he also worked at the United Nations as Deputy Counsel for the Volcker Commission.

Mr. Brendan R. Joseph (Sweden)



medical student at the Karolinska Institute.

Mr. Brendan R. Joseph is Sweden's Youth Representative to UNESCO and a member of the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO. Mr. Joseph represents more than 650,000 children and young people engaged in Swedish civil society on issues related to education, science, culture and communication. He has held several leadership roles in civil society, including as Vice President of the Swedish Federation of Young Scientists and President of the Red Cross Youth in Uppsala. He is also a member of the Steering Group for the Nordic Youth Pool for Climate and Biodiversity. He is currently a

Dr. Bader Al-Madi (Jordan)



political psychology, terrorism and extremism, media framing, and social and economic developments in Jordan.

Dr. Bader Al-Madi is an academic and researcher specialising in political sociology, international relations, conflict, migration and Middle Eastern politics. Dr. Madi holds a PhD in Sociology, with a focus on political sociology and international development, from Brigham Young University, and an MA in Political Science from the University of Jordan. He has taught at several institutions in Jordan, including the University of Jordan, the German-Jordanian University, CIEE, CET, Middlebury College and NYIT-Amman. His teaching and research cover Middle Eastern politics, human rights, refugees and migration,

Dr. Mansour Almarzoqi (Saudi Arabia)



from Oregon State University.

Dr. Mansour Almarzoqi is an Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of the Centre for American Studies at the Prince Saud Al Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies at the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Almarzoqi previously served as Vice President for Research and Strategic Studies and Director of the Think Tanks Department at the Saudi Centre for International Strategic Partnerships in Riyadh. His work focuses on political science, strategic studies, international affairs and cultural studies. Dr. Almarzoqi holds a PhD from Sciences Po Lyon, an MA from Sciences Po Paris, and two BAs in Political Science and English Literature

Dr. Noha El-Mikawy (Egypt)



Dr. El-Mikawy holds a PhD and MA in Political Science from UCLA.

Dr. Noha El-Mikawy is former Dean of the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the American University in Cairo (2022-2026). Dr. El-Mikawy previously served for 10 years as Director of the Ford Foundation's Middle East and North Africa office. From 2005 to 2012, she worked with UNDP as Team Leader for Governance at the Regional Centre in the Arab States and as Policy Adviser at the Oslo Governance Centre. She has also held academic, research and lecturing positions at institutions including the University of Bonn, AUC, the Free University of Berlin and Erlangen-Nuremberg University.

Ms. Jessica Obeid (Lebanon)



Ms. Jessica Obeid is Founding Partner of New Energy Consult in Dubai and a senior energy engineer and strategist with over 17 years of experience shaping sustainable energy systems across the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Ms. Obeid's work spans infrastructure, policy and governance. She serves on the boards of Iris Solar Technology, Azure Strategy in London and the Middle East Institute Switzerland in Geneva. Her previous roles include Resident Fellow at Chatham House, Non-Resident Scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington, DC, Head of Energy Transition at SRMG Think and Chief Energy Engineer at UNDP.

H.E. Amb. Maria Sargren (Sweden)



H.E. Amb. Maria Sargren has served as Ambassador of Sweden to Jordan since October 2024. Amb. Sargren has over 30 years of diplomatic experience, with a particular focus on development policy, multilateral organisations and the European Union. She has previously served as Ambassador of Sweden to Burkina Faso and Cambodia. Her diplomatic career has included postings at Sweden's Permanent Representations to the United Nations in New York and Geneva, the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, and Sweden's Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels. She has also worked at the European Commission as a seconded national

expert. Amb. Sargren is a graduate of the University of Gothenburg and the Amsterdam School of International Relations.

H.E. Mr. Magnus Schöldtz (Sweden)



H.E. Magnus Schöldtz is a Director and Senior Advisor of Wallenberg Office at Wallenberg Investments AB, a former Swedish Ambassador to the UAE and a board member of the Middle East Institute. Ambassador Schöldtz has served in diplomatic roles related to the EU, NATO and the Middle East, and held positions with the United Nations in Lebanon and Somalia and the Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters. Ambassador Schöldtz is a member of the Board of Business Sweden, an associate of the European Round Table for Industry, a sherpa of Nordic Compass, the Nordic Round Table, and a member of the European Executive Board of the Trilateral Commission and the Expert Group at the Swedish Centre for Eastern European Studies.

Baroness Simone Susskind-Weinberger (Belgium)



Baroness Simone Susskind-Weinberger is a Belgian politician and long-standing advocate for human rights, women's rights and Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. Bns. Susskind has worked for decades to advance gender equality, women's political participation and dialogue between European and South Mediterranean societies. She was President of the Jewish Secular Community Centre from 1985 to 1995 and Founding President of Actions in the Mediterranean, promoting dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. In 2002, she joined the High-Level Advisory Group formed by Romano Prodi to examine polarisation between societies. Bns. Susskind also served as a member of the Brussels Parliament and the Belgian federal Senate from 2014 to 2019.