



Arab Reform Initiative

The leading independent Arab think tank

Annual Report

2017



**Cover photo**

Pyramid of Crisis © Munir Sayegh.

Art by Hanaa El Degham



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# Message From the Executive Director



**In 2017, as the heavy legacy of authoritarian rule and the most destructive forms of violent conflict threatened the very survival of states and the fate of citizens, the work of the Arab Reform Initiative proved more relevant than ever.**

In this defining moment, the ARI community has been making a unique contribution. Our extensive research into the fragmentation of security in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen has advanced the current thinking and policy action regarding the resolution of the region's various conflicts and peacebuilding efforts. ARI has also provided country-specific recommendations to social and political actors as well as international players to counter the democratic backsliding occurring across the region.

Over the past year, we have reaffirmed our position as the preeminent institution working on and for Syria, engaging in research and policy dialogues that provide crucial information related to negotiations and the reestablishment of peace and security, and putting forth bold programs of action that directly support Syrian civil society groups.

ARI has also strengthened itself institutionally over the past year, expanding its Board of Directors and putting into place a new Monitoring and Evaluation system that allows us to measure our impact and assure accountability to ourselves and our partners.

ARI has firmly established its reputation as the leading independent think tank at the forefront of research on social and political change in the Arab world. With these strengths, ARI today is equipped to answer a new set of questions over the future of the Middle East given the continued destabilization of the region. There are no quick fixes, but radical re-thinking is needed if we want to rehabilitate the basic values of democracy, which have lost their attractiveness in this region.

Looking forward, ARI remains committed to bridging the knowledge gap within each society about its own realities and mobilizing intellectual resources of the region to ensure action-oriented visions for change.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Kodmani', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Bassma Kodmani**  
Executive Director



## 2017 by the Numbers

**22,000+**  
followers on  
social media



**14**  
tools and strategies  
deployed among key  
stakeholders

**11,000+**  
recipients of ARI  
publications  
worldwide

**60**  
early-career women  
trained in research  
and advocacy

**Dozens**  
of consultations with  
policy makers

# Our Impact

**The Arab Reform Initiative is the leading independent Arab think tank, founded in 2005 to articulate a homegrown agenda for democratic change. It operates on the principles of impartiality, social justice, gender equality, and diversity.**

In 2017, ARI successfully engaged in dialogue with international policy-making and decision-making circles, influenced international development strategies, and helped shape public opinion and the content of public debate in the Arab region and in Europe/North America.

In addition, ARI's outputs had an important presence in the Arab and Western media and have been regularly diffused along various communications channels as well as by major universities and research centers across the world. ARI informed a variety of European and UN decision-makers on policy options in Syria and Libya; helped shape the strategic lines of Official Development Aid (ODA) in the fields of higher education and refugee assistance; and contributed directly to the achievement of the UN Resolution 1325 and the Women, Peace, and Security agenda through collaboration with the Syrian women's advisory group, which convinced the Negotiations Commission to create a special committee for gender equality and inclusion of minorities and to include at least 30% women in decision-making structures.

## **Accountability to Ourselves and our Partners**

ARI uses a monitoring and evaluation process to elaborate the logical framework and theory of change for each project, using a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators in order to assess both the implementation of activities as well as the achievement of objectives and impact.

ARI measures its impact around five key indicators: policy impact, engagement of stakeholders, gender equality, deployment of strategies, and visibility. These are measured at both the institution-wide level as well as the project-specific and publication-specific levels. Every three months, the ARI research and program staff gather to report on the indicators, allowing us to measure in real time the impact of our work but also to adjust as necessary to guarantee that objectives are met.



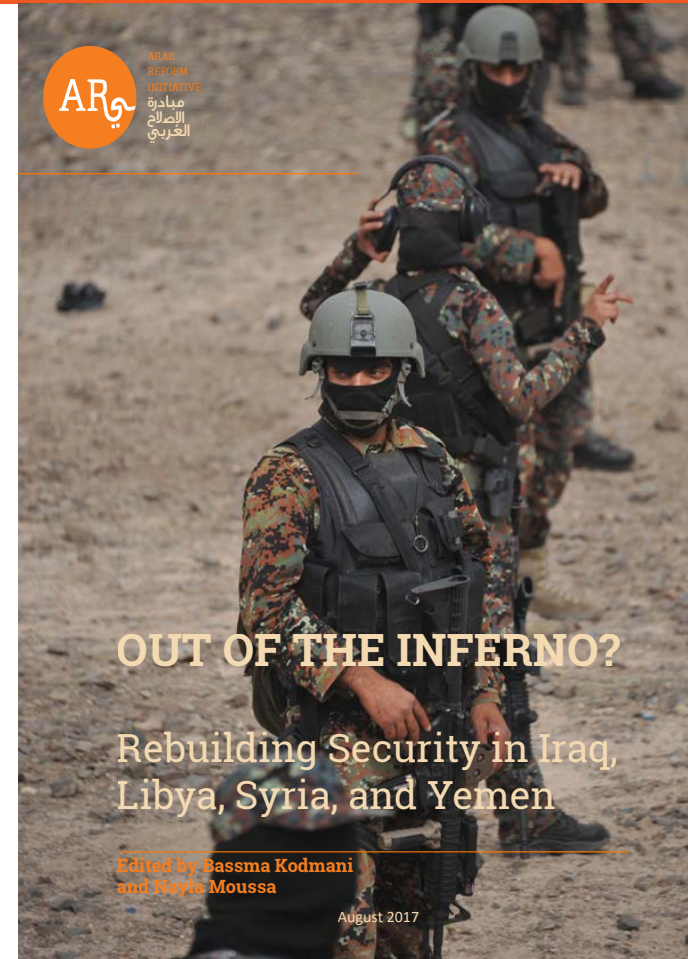


## Analysis and Insight

Through our network of over 22 think tanks and 100+ researchers, ARI's research in 2017 provided insider perspectives and analyses based on our unique blend of traditional research methods and policy dialogues with key stakeholders. This has translated to new insights on a range of topics, from rebuilding security from the ground and the transition out of war to alternative forms of mobilization and active citizenship.

# 1 Rebuilding Security and Transitional Governance

Over the past decade, ARI has become a leading institution studying Arab security sectors and their link to authoritarian regime survival, and more recently the descent into chaos and floundering transitions and peacebuilding processes. Our contribution to critical security studies and Arab security sectors continued in 2017, addressing the challenges of rebuilding security when states have all but collapsed and when societies need to engage in a re-foundation of the social contract that ties the different components of the nation together.



## Rebuilding Security in Fragmented Societies

The situation in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen demonstrates the incredible fragmentation of the security sectors alongside the establishment of local security arrangements. ARI's groundbreaking project, "Rebuilding Security in Fragmented Societies," which ended in 2017, investigated the de facto local situations in all four cases, and the possibilities for building inclusive political and security systems that guarantee human security for all.

The security project culminated with the publication in September 2017 of the e-book, "Out of the Inferno? Rebuilding Security in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen." The book contributed to both academic as well as policy knowledge by providing in-depth, insider analyses on the sequencing of peacebuilding approaches. The project will continue in 2018-2020 with processes engaged by civil and military figures to design integrated security frameworks in post-conflict contexts.

### Decentralization

A key aspect of rebuilding states in the Arab world is to allow societies to re-negotiate their state structures and agree on the distribution of power between the central state and the different regions. Recognizing the diversity in experiences, the "Decentralization" project seeks to foster dialogue, exchange, and country-specific research about processes of decentralization and the importance of emphasizing governance reconstruction.

Following background research and meetings in 2017, the project will continue in 2018 with comparative cases from Morocco, Tunisia, and Iraq.



**On 8 September 2017, ARI held an international workshop to launch the publication of its e-book, "Out of the Inferno: Rebuilding Security in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen" in Paris, France.**

**The conference was attended by 30 experts on Arab security sectors and key stakeholders in diplomatic and decision-making circles. The conference discussed the arrangements in political and security terms that can lead to long-term political agreements for conflict resolution.**



## ② Fostering Pluralism and the Social Democratic Space

**ARI conducted rigorous and comprehensive research on diverse actors who build coalitions for sustainable reform in the region, focusing in particular on respecting diversity, guaranteeing minorities' rights, and establishing constructive dialogue.**

### **The Future of Human Rights Work in North Africa**

Massive demonstrations demanding dignity, freedom, and social justice in 2010-2011 reverberated from Yemen to Tunisia. However, in the following years no major social or political forces truly were able to effectively respond to these public demands. ARI's project "The Future of Human Rights in North Africa" seeks to analyze the trajectory of human rights organizations in Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt. In 2017, a series of studies were published exploring a variety of dimensions of North African human rights movements and the ways in which actors can adjust to major socio-political shifts post-Arab Spring.

### **Organizing the Social Democratic Space**

ARI seeks to support like-minded democratic actors from different countries who have made social justice, respect for minorities, and inclusion a priority. ARI's work in 2017 within the project "Organizing the Social Democratic Space" included a mapping across the region of political parties or movements that actively identify as social democratic actors, public debates regarding decentralization and the view of the political system by minorities, and identification of newspapers, think tanks, and media outlets that can and do transmit social democratic values.

# 3 Rebuilding a Post-Conflict Syria

**Since 2011, ARI has placed special emphasis on Syria. ARI used its unique position as a safe space for research and independent exchange, and its extensive network of researchers and political figures, to develop policy options for conflict resolution.**

## **Leveraging the Syrian Diaspora**

The relationship between the Syrian diaspora worldwide is evolving as a result of the ongoing conflict. Recognizing that the success of the Syrian diaspora endows it with skills, expertise, and resources, ARI has mobilized the Syrian diaspora to allow it to play a positive role in the rebuilding process.

ARI's project, "Leveraging the Syrian Diaspora" seeks to stimulate a real dynamic between the Syrian diaspora and the management of the Syrian crisis. In 2017, ARI carried out 11 studies on the various Syrian diasporic communities worldwide and other major Middle Eastern diasporas. These studies form part of a larger publication for 2018, when ARI's organization of a major international conference on the Syrian diaspora will take place.



# 4

## Building New Paths for Participation

In 2017, ARI has carried out extensive research into new forms of social mobilization and political organizing, particularly the diverse formats of “politics from below.”

### From Social Mobilization to Political Organization

In 2017, ARI completed its multi-phase research program involving 13 case studies on social and political movements that arose in Egypt post-2011 and the organization of policy dialogues with 50 opinion-leaders around central policy issues related to the right to organize. The project culminated with the publication of two volumes of research and policy papers under the collective title “Effervescent Egypt: New Venues of Mobilization and the Interrupted Legacy of 2011” along with the publication of an Arabic-language dictionary of social movement theory’s key concepts and analytical tools.



### Arab Youth as Political Actors

In 2017, ARI’s project “Arab Youth as Political Actors” carried out extensive field work in Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Syria into new forms of youth engagement, re-casting the concept of “youth” not as social category but rather a collective, new practice of politics. The project will continue in 2018 with the organization of policy dialogues and the establishment of a digital platform highlighting the innovations of youth mobilization.

### Social and Economic Policy Formation

In 2017, ARI completed a project “Social and Economic Policy Formation in Morocco and Egypt.” Through comparative case studies and lesson-sharing between relevant groups, the project identified strategies and potential pitfalls for civil society actors in different political contexts. This culminated in the publication of the e-book in July “Civil Society and Public Policy Formation: Lessons from Morocco and Egypt.”

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# Measuring Transitions to Democracy

In over a decade of work, ARI has led measurement of the Arab democratic transition through its large-scale, cross-national quantitative research. ARI collects and disseminates information on public opinion, popularly-held values, reform processes and their impact on the average citizen.



## Arab Democracy Index

ARI produces bi-annually the Arab Democracy Index, a report that measures the democratic transition on a per-country basis through 42 indicators. In 2017, ARI and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research published the fifth Arab Democracy Index covering Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. The report showed a decline in the Index, reflecting the contraction or closure of the space for freedoms that was opened to the Arab communities in 2011.

## Arab Barometer

ARI is a partner of the Arab Barometer, part of the Global Barometer project, which produces an exceptionally rich database of politically-relevant attitudes of ordinary citizens. In 2017, the Arab Barometer completed its fourth wave of surveys covering Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan. The survey results are publicly available as open source data in SPSS and STATA format that can be utilized by researchers anywhere.

مبادرة الإصلاح العربي  
مؤسسة رائدة للفكر المستقل

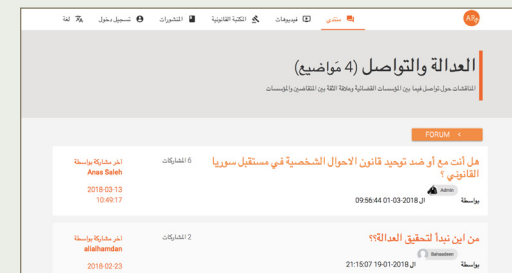
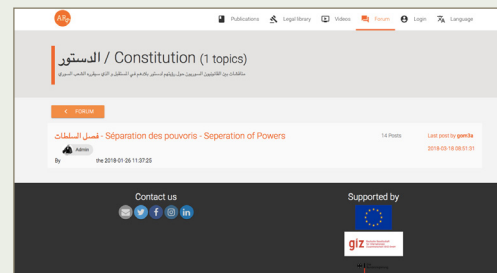
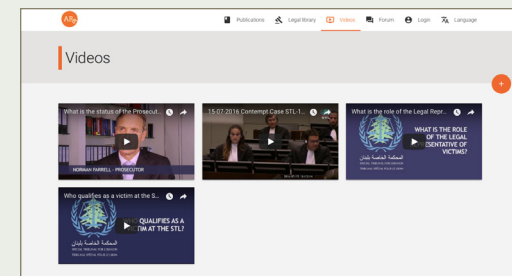
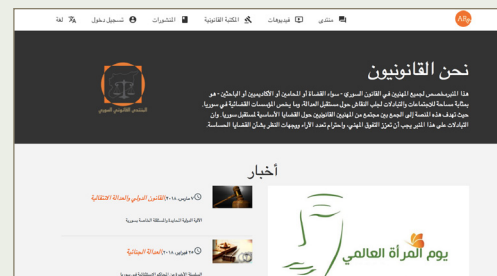


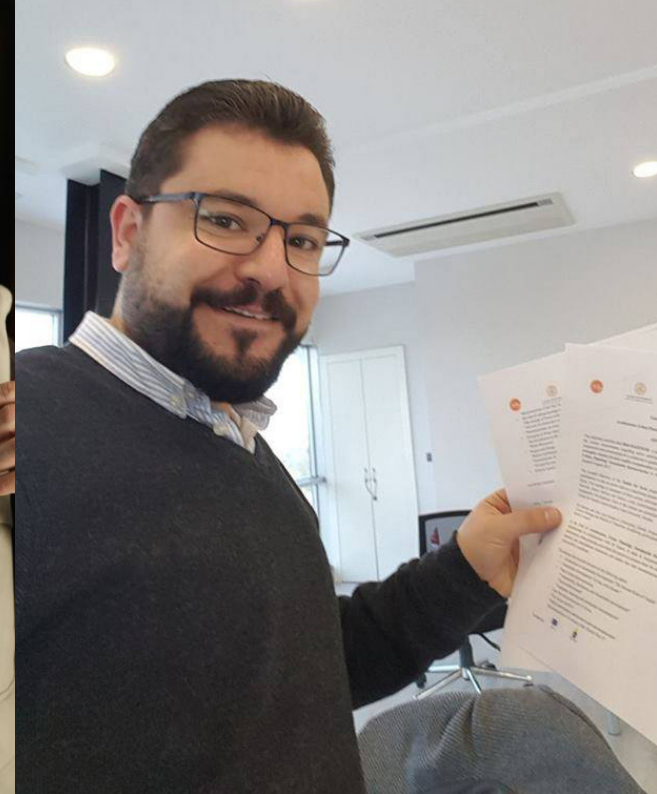
# Engaging Agents Of Change

ARI supported research undertaken by young scholars, and hosted online legal forums for justice professionals, prioritizing action-research activities to work directly with key stakeholders in order to promote bottom-up and locally-owned processes of change.

## Tahdir for Syrians

Since 2015, ARI has been implementing its one-of-a-kind higher education program, “Tahdir for Syrians,” which uses an Arabic-language platform to deliver specialized theoretical and practical training in subjects directly related to post-conflict reconstruction. The program, which targets Syrian students and professionals, offers modules in rule of law and security sector reform; local administration; and sustainable urban development, as well as common courses on topics ranging from psychosocial support, project management, and democratic decision-making, for a total of 15 ECTS. ARI has trained almost 300 Syrians through the program, which will be extended in the next three years to also include a module on peacebuilding processes.





### **Legal Forum for Syria**

Syrian lawyers and judges will be among the first group of professionals involved in implementing judicial and non-judicial mechanisms in the transitional process in Syria. In 2017, ARI launched its Legal Forum for Syria, a digital platform providing Syrian legal professionals with a variety of tools: access to studies and key legal documents, online debates and exchanges - to rebuild the legal sector and prepare for transitional justice in post-conflict Syria. The platform is accessible in English, French, and Arabic to maximize participation by Syrian and international legal professionals and to counter the isolation many currently feel, while also strengthening their capacity to act as defenders of human rights.

The platform is available at: [syrianlegalforum.net](http://syrianlegalforum.net)

### **Arab Research Support Program**

In 2017, ARI completed its final round of the Arab Research Support Program (ARSP), a training and mentorship program for early career scholars across the Arab world targeting five domains of research: institutional reform of state agencies, the new women's mobilization, the democratic transition, security sector reform, and social movements and contentious politics.

Since its launch in 2011, ARSP allowed more than 100 researchers and regional institutional initiatives to benefit from funding and direct exchange with experts in their chosen field, while also providing policy writing skills training.

# Governance and Management



**ARI is governed by a Plenary of its members and an Executive Committee.**

**The Plenary brings together 20 policy research centers from across the Arab world as well as Europe and the USA, along with four independent members. The Plenary operates as a network that fosters collaborative efforts between members, and meets every two years to set ARI's vision and advise on programmatic lines of work.**

Current members of the Plenary are:

- **Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies**, Egypt
- **Arab Forum for Alternatives**, Egypt
- **The Arab Reform Forum at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina**, Egypt
- **The Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research - Baseera**, Egypt
- **The Center for Strategic Studies**, Jordan
- **The Lebanese Center for Policy Studies**, Lebanon
- **Center for Studies in Research and Social Sciences (CERSS)**, Morocco
- **The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research**, Palestine

- **King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies**, Saudi Arabia
- **EtanaCenter**, Syria
- **The Syrian League for Citizenship**, Syria
- **L'Observatoire Tunisien de la Transition Démocratique**, Tunisia
- **The Gulf Research Center**, Dubai, UAE
- **The Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights**, Yemen
- **Casa Árabe**, Spain
- **Center for European Reform**, UK
- **Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)**, Greece

- **The European Institute for Security Studies**, France
- **Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero**, Argentina
- **US Middle East Project**, U.S.A
- **Salah Eddin al Jourshi, President, Al Jahedh Forum**, Tunisia
- **Yezid Sayigh, Senior Associate, Carnegie Middle East Center**, Lebanon
- **Jafar Al-Shayeb, Muntada al-Thulatha' al-Thaqafi**, Saudi Arabia
- **Haidar Ibrahim, Center for Sudanese Studies**, Sudan

**The Executive Committee acts as the governing Board. Meeting twice a year, the Executive Committee is currently composed of six members who serve for a period of four years, renewable once.**

Current members of the Executive Committee are:

- **Dr. Atallah Kuttab, Chairman.** Holding a Ph.D. from Imperial College, University of London, Dr. Kuttab has worked in engineering consulting in the private sector, and ten years in education at Birzeit University in Palestine and Heriot-Watt University in Scotland. From 2005 to 2011, he was Director General of the Welfare Association, the lead foundation supporting Palestinians primarily in Palestine and Lebanon. He is currently the Chairman and Founder of SAANED for Philanthropy Advisory in the Arab Region based in Jordan. Since April 2014 he is a Richard von Weizsaecker Fellow at Bosch Stiftung in Berlin.
- **Dr. Nacer Djabi, Vice-Chairman.** Professor of Political Science and Sociology at Algiers University, he has been a research fellow at CREAD (Centre de recherche en économie appliquée pour le développement) since 1986. From 2006 to 2014 he held the position of Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences. He is a leading expert on governance and civil society in Algeria and North Africa more generally, on social movements, labor unions, youth movements and youth aspirations.
- **Ms. Maria Chatti-Gautier, Treasurer.** Ms. Chatti-Gautier has extensive experience in the economic and financial sector, with over 30 years as an officer with various Paris-based financial institutions: Chase Manhattan Bank, Banque Arabe et Internationale d'Investissement, Natixis Private Equity, Oddo Private Equity. She is a specialist in private equity and fundraising for family-owned SMEs (small and medium size enterprises), and has sat on the board of more than 40 different companies.
- **Dr. Hoda Elsadda, General Secretary.** Dr. Elsadda is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Cairo University and an activist for women's rights. She previously held a Chair in the Study of the Contemporary Arab World at Manchester University, and was Co-Director of the Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World in the UK. She was Carnegie Visiting Scholar at Georgetown University in 2014-2015. She was member of the 50-member committee that drafted the Egyptian constitution endorsed in a referendum in 2014 and was coordinator of the Freedoms and Rights Committee in the Constitutional Assembly.
- **Ms. Hanin Ghaddar,** Managing Editor of NOW - where she writes commentary and analysis on Lebanese and regional politics, Syria, and Iran. She is a regular contributor to a number of publications, including the New York Times, Foreign Policy, and Al-Hayat. She is a former Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and researcher for the SURF-Arab States Program at the United Nations Development Program. She holds a Bachelor's degree in English literature and a Master's degree in Middle Eastern Studies, both from the American University in Beirut.
- **Mr. Jafar Al-Shayeb** is a Saudi writer, political activist, and an elected Chairman of Qatif Municipal Council in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. He is also a sponsor of Muntada al-Thulatha' al-Thaqafi, an online platform for dialogue and discussion on different social and political issues, and currently manages his own business in telecommunications and IT consulting. He previously worked in the fields of finance and administration and participated in National Dialogue Conferences in Saudi Arabia.

# Funding and Financial Statement

The Arab Reform Initiative is registered in France as an independent autonomous non-profit institution operating under French law of 1901. Its sister organization, Moubaradat al-Islah al-Arabi, is registered in Lebanon as an international NGO. ARI's financial situation is externally evaluated: balance sheets are drawn up every year by an external accounting firm, and accounts are audited by an external auditing firm every two years.

In 2017, ARI received funding from the Ford Foundation, the International Development and Research Center of Canada, Open Society Foundations, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission, the Olof Palme International Center, the European Endowment for Democracy, and Brot für die Welt: Bread for the World.

## ARI Expenditures 2017

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<b>Personnel</b>	<b>\$704,722</b>
<b>Operational Costs</b>	<b>\$90,189</b>
<b>Research and Publications</b>	<b>\$182,858</b>
<b>Tahdir for Syrians Project</b>	<b>\$676,700</b>
<b>Conferences, Events, and Travel</b>	<b>\$115,786</b>
<b>Communications</b>	<b>\$64,151</b>
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<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,834,406</b>

# List of Publications

## Reports

- Effervescent Egypt: Venues of Mobilization and the Interrupted Legacy of 2011, Volumes I and II
- Out of the Inferno? Rebuilding Security in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen Civil Society and Public Policy Formation: Strategies from Morocco and Egypt
- Arab Democracy Index 5

## Policy Alternatives

- Aleppo Christians: A Turbulent History and the Path Ahead
- Stage One of the UN Libya Action Plan: The Likelihood of Failure and the Need for Review
- The Authoritarian Roots of Contemporary Islamist Discourse
- A New Generation of Protests in Morocco? How Hirak al-Rif Endures?
- Education Policies in Morocco: Can the Government Fix What It Broke?
- Gaza: Possible Outcomes of Egypt, Hamas, and Dahlan Talks
- The Long Reach of the Gulf Crisis
- Egypt's Unexceptional State of Emergency
- The Arab Socialist Baath Party: Preparing for the Post-War Era Between Indifference and Charity: Syrian Refugees and the Syrian Diaspora in Brazil
- «The Disaster of Aleppo» and the Quandry of the Last Opportunity
- The Political Impasse of the Syrian Kurdish Movement
- The Cultural Map: A Tool for Development and Peacebuilding

## Jadal

- Saudi Arabia's (Bad) Options in Lebanon
- Mohammed Bin Salman: The Remaking of the Foundations of Saudi Monarchy?
- Iraq's Challenge of Securing Mosul

## Research Papers

- Rights and Politics: Human Rights Action and Socio-economic Struggles in Tunisia
- The Human Rights Movement and Contentious Politics in Egypt (2004-2014)
- The Problematics of Governance and the Human Rights Movement in Morocco
- Unsolved Dilemmas: Issues of Internal Governance in Egypt's Human Rights NGOs
- Institutional Reform of State Agencies in the Arab Region
- Social Movements and Demands, and Contentious Politics in the Arab Region
- The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood Movement: From Pillar of Monarchy to Enemy of the State
- Security in the Context of Transition and Conflict
- The New Women's Mobilization and Processes of National and Regional Diffusion
- Processes and Actors of Democratic Transition
- Origins, Evolution and Challenges to the Human Rights Movement in Tunisia
- The Evolution of Morocco's Human Rights Movement
- The Formal Birth of the Human Rights Movement in Egypt
- National Reconciliation and Protection of Minorities



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