


Just Transition Green Bridge

Civil Society Organizations and Just Transition in the Middle East and North Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

 29-31 May, 2023

 Rotana Gefinor-Clemenceau, Beirut

 Available on ZOOM & Facebook Live

The Conference Agenda

The ongoing climate, political, economic, and social crises across the Middle East and North Africa have made engaging in a collective process of transition to a more just and sustainable economic and environmental model an absolute necessity. In order to build such a future, there is a need to address key topics such as water access, food security and sovereignty, and energy transition through a multifaceted perspective combining ecological, social, economic, and political lenses. Hence the notion of "just transition", which has been taken up by some governments, civil society actors, and even some private entities, although they seldom agree on what constitutes such a transition or how it can be implemented in the Middle East and North Africa. Ongoing international events and processes have also affected perspectives on just transition, though the region and its priorities often seem marginalized in such conversations.

This conference seeks to address the questions of what exactly would constitute a just transition in the Middle East and North Africa (notably when it comes to access to food and water justice) given the myriad of challenges and the restrictive spaces for mobilization, notably for marginalized communities. In addition, it will explore who decides and sets the agenda for just transition in the region and how civil society organizations (CSOs) can mobilize and work with local communities towards the achievement of a more inclusive process. The dynamics between local and international actors will be explored, notably the question of how the international community can support environmental CSOs in developing a home-grown agenda that is responsive to local needs. Finally, the issue of reframing the narrative around the needed changes for a sustainable future in the region will be explored through the lens of strengthening collaborations with journalists to push for an increase in public awareness of those matters.



- **Fourth Annual Environmental Politics Conference**
Civil Society Organizations and Just Transition in the Middle East and North Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

Organized by the Arab Reform Initiative, the Alternative Policy Solution at the American University of Cairo, and the Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis and funded by the European Commission, this conference is part of the Just Transition Green Bridge project, a three-year project that aims to empower CSOs and locally led initiatives in Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine, Algeria, and Jordan. This conference will hence bring together leading experts, activists, and policymakers in six panels to explore the critical issues facing the region in the context of climate change and social justice. Our diverse group of panelists will discuss topics such as climate finance, the energy transition, gender and social justice, community resilience, and more. The conference aims to foster dialogue, build partnerships, and inspire action towards a more just and sustainable future for the Middle East and North Africa.

Day 1: Monday, May 29th

9:30 am–9:45 am: Welcome and registration

9:45 am–10:00 am: Opening session (welcoming remarks and introduction) delivered together by ARI, MIPA, and AUC

10:00 am-11:30 am Panel 1: What constitutes environmental justice and just transition in the Middle East and North Africa?

While multiple schools of thought have emerged with different perspectives on what would be required in order for a just and sustainable transition to be achieved in the Middle East and North Africa, they all agree on the need to push for a fairer and more sustainable mode of production that centers communities and the environment. This panel thus explores what would constitute environmental justice and just transition in the MENA, the different perspectives on just transition, who is currently setting the agenda and priority areas and who is excluded, and the political obstacles for the adoption of a just transition agenda for the region. The panel will include a discussion of the role of international donors in the context of a just transition in the MENA region.



Funded by
the European Union



Arab
Reform
Initiative



ALTERNATIVE
POLICY
SOLUTIONS



المعهد المغربي لتحليل السياسات
MOROCCAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
٠٥٤١٠٨ ٠٤٢٥٤٥٤ | ٨٥٨٥٤ | +٥٥٠٦٦

- **Fourth Annual Environmental Politics Conference**
Civil Society Organizations and Just Transition in the Middle East and North Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

Moderator:

Sarine Karajerjian

Director of the Environmental Politics Program at the Arab Reform Initiative

Speakers:

Shady Khalil

Co-Founder, Greenish and Regional Campaign Lead, Greenpeace MENA

Saker el Nour

Sociologist and independent consultant, co-founder of RÉSEAU-TANMO

Lisa Shahin

Advocacy and Research Coordinator, the Arab Group for the Protection of Nature

Rayan Kassem

Engagement Manager on Food and Agriculture Transformation, World Benchmarking Alliance

11:30 am–12:00 pm: Coffee Break

12:00 pm–1:30 pm: Panel 2: The coming environmental changes and vulnerable communities: who is most impacted and who is being left out?

Food, water, and energy are crucial to human existence, and how they are governed affects outcomes in terms of social equality and socio-economic resilience. Available evidence shows that access to these resources is not neutral to gender, race, or class. Indeed, gender inequality, socio-economic vulnerability, and cultural norms contribute to women's susceptibility to the impact of climate change and limit their capacity to respond effectively to climate risks, and disadvantaged socio-economic classes and minorities have faced challenges of their own when dealing with the impact of climate change and environmental degradation.



Funded by
the European Union



Arab
Reform
Initiative



ALTERNATIVE
POLICY
SOLUTIONS



المعهد المغربي لتحليل السياسات
MOROCCAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
٠٥٤١٠٨ ٠٤٢٥٤٥٤ | ٨٥٨٥٤ | +٥٥٠٠٦

- **Fourth Annual Environmental Politics Conference**
Civil Society Organizations and Just Transition in the Middle East and North Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

This panel seeks to tackle gender, race, and class issues related to water, energy, and food and shed light on the importance of integrating or mainstreaming such dimensions in environmental actions in the MENA region. The panel will also address issues related to the role that CSOs can play to improve equality in access to natural resources and promote the participation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes.

Moderator:

Lamia Bulbul

Lead Consultant and Researcher, Alternative Policy Solution at the American University in Cairo

Speakers:

Ouafa Haddioui

North Africa Program Assistant, Transnational Institute

Layla Riahi

Member of the Tunisian Platform for Alternatives and the Working Group for Food Sovereignty

Imène Louati

Program Manager, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung

Safaa al Jayoussi

Climate Justice Advisor for the Middle East and North Africa, Oxfam International

Melissa Pawson

Engagement Editor, Beyond Trafficking and Slavery, and Freelance Journalist

Samah Hadid

Head of Advocacy in Media and Communications for the Middle East and North Africa, Norwegian Refugee Council

1:30 pm until 2:30 pm: Lunch Break



Funded by
the European Union



Arab
Reform
Initiative



ALTERNATIVE
POLICY
SOLUTIONS



المعهد المغربي لتحليل السياسات
MOROCCAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
٠٥٤١٠٧٠٠٤٠٤ | ٨٥٧٥٤ | +٥٥٠٠٦

- **Fourth Annual Environmental Politics Conference**
Civil Society Organizations and Just Transition in the
Middle East and North Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

2:30 pm–4:00 pm: Panel 3: The intersections between water and food sovereignty and security?

The interlinked subjects of food and water sovereignty occupy a key space within the debate on just transition, as they are widely considered urgent topics with an immediate impact on the everyday lives of millions. Civil society organizations have taken a keen interest in working to alleviate food and water scarcity and in pushing for food and water security and sovereignty as one of the core tenets of a just and sustainable transition. This panel will explore the role CSOs play in advocating and pushing for food and water sovereignty in the Middle East and North Africa and the ways in which food and water security and sovereignty can be achieved as part of a process of just transition. How have the climate and environmental crises shown the need to transform our current food and water systems? What food and water systems should we be switching to, and how will the switch be just?

Moderator:

Julia Choucair Vizoso

Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Arab Reform Initiative

Speakers:

Natasha Carmi

Lead Water Specialist, Geneva Water Hub

Mourad Zenasni

Professor of Economics, Universite Mohammed Premier

Kanj Hamade

Co-founder, Economic Development Solutions



Funded by
the European Union



Arab
Reform
Initiative



ALTERNATIVE
POLICY
SOLUTIONS



المعهد المغربي لتحليل السياسات
MOROCCAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
٠٥٤١٠٨ ٠٤٢٥٤٥٤ | ٨٥٨٥٤ | +٥٥٠٠٦

- **Fourth Annual Environmental Politics Conference**
Civil Society Organizations and Just Transition in the Middle East and North Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

4:00 pm–5:00 pm: Keynote Talk

Alessandra Viezzer

Head of Cooperation, European Union Delegation to Lebanon

Nadim Houry

Executive Director, Arab Reform Initiative

Day 2: Tuesday, 30th of May

10:00 am–11:30 am: Panel 4: What energy transition? Between the appetite for oil and gas and the appeal of green energy made for export

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has sent Europe looking for alternative sources of oil and gas in the MENA region. Meanwhile, investments in green energy production in the MENA region have tended to favor big production facilities geared towards exporting clean energy, which often fail to benefit neighboring communities in the countries of production. How can the shift to renewable energy lead to a reassessment of relations between energy-producing and energy-consuming countries? How can environmental priorities be best integrated into an energy transition process? How can the transition to renewable sources of energy affect the political economy in energy-producing countries where oil and gas have historically favored clientelist networks dominated by autocratic power structures? What roles can the international community play in supporting the energy transition in the Middle East and North Africa?

Moderator:

Malek Lakhel

Research Fellow, Arab Reform Initiative



Funded by
the European Union



Arab
Reform
Initiative



ALTERNATIVE
POLICY
SOLUTIONS



المعهد المغربي لتحليل السياسات
MOROCCAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
٠٥٤١٠٨ ٠٤٢٥٤٥٤ | ٨٥٢٥٤ | +٥٥٠٠٦

- **Fourth Annual Environmental Politics Conference**
Civil Society Organizations and Just Transition in the Middle East and North Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

Speakers:

Clementine Lienard

Climate Security Analyst at the Brussels International Center

Jina Talj

Founder and Director, Diaries of the Ocean, and National Coordinator, Coalition for Energy Governance

Zeina Abla

Co-Founder, Ebla Research Collective

Omer Badokhon

Founder and President, Solutions for Sustainable Society

Ruba Ajjour

Manager of the Climate Change Studies Division, Royal Scientific Society

11:30 am until 12:00 pm: Coffee Break

12pm-1:30pm: Panel 5: Financing Just Transition: Climate Finance, Reparations, Loss and Damage, and Civil Society Organizations

Climate finance is at the heart of international negotiations on the environment. Each Conference of Parties brings forth increasingly ambitious pledges that oftentimes fall short of what would actually be needed to adequately finance adaptation and mitigation efforts. Climate finance has also been criticized for its insufficiently transparent procedures and its reliance on loans and private sector investments. In contrast with this approach, can climate finance be instead directly delivered to civil society organizations and to NGOs focusing on just transition, and would this lead to a larger impact? This panel will seek to explore how climate finance can be leveraged to help environmental CSOs, the case for redirecting some climate finance from government and the private sector to CSOs, and how this could lead to a paradigm shift with regards to how climate finance is perceived.



Funded by
the European Union



Arab
Reform
Initiative



ALTERNATIVE
POLICY
SOLUTIONS



المعهد المغربي لتحليل السياسات
MOROCCAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
٥٤١٠٨ ٥٢٧٥٤٥٤ | ٨٥٨٥٤ | +٥٥٠٥٦

- **Fourth Annual Environmental Politics Conference**
Civil Society Organizations and Just Transition in the
Middle East and North Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

Moderator:

Youness Lebtar

Executive Director, Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis

Speakers:

Amjad Bani Issa

Project Coordinator, Green Generation Foundation

Ahmed el Droubi

International Campaigns Manager, Climate Action Network-International

Sara Hess

Associate Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social
Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Salma Kadry Climate, Peace, and Security Specialist, Consultative Group for
International Agricultural Research

1:30 pm–3:00 pm: Lunch Break

3:00 pm–4:30 pm: Panel 6: On Narratives and Public Opinion: The Role of Media

The media can play a key role in pushing for environmental consciousness amongst the general population, and it can also be central to introducing the central tenets of just transition and, notably, how environmental issues are tied to social, political, and economic choices. In parallel, environmental journalists in the Middle East and North Africa have recently faced increased restrictions from states, and there has been a generalized closing of civic spaces, which has limited journalists' ability to work. This panel will convene 5 journalists to discuss how they cover environmental transition and environmental organizations and how journalists can collaborate with environmental activists. How can journalists use international platforms to advocate for a just transition in the Middle East and North Africa?



Funded by
the European Union



Arab
Reform
Initiative



ALTERNATIVE
POLICY
SOLUTIONS



المعهد المغربي لتحليل السياسات
MOROCCAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
٠٥٤١٠٨ ٠٤٢٥٤٥٤ | ٨٥٨٥٤ | +٥٥٠٥٦

- **Fourth Annual Environmental Politics Conference**
Civil Society Organizations and Just Transition in the
Middle East and North Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

Moderator:

Mónica Carrión Otero

Project Manager, Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis

Speakers:

Safaa Khalaf

Iraqi journalist and researcher in sociology and politics

Zeina Shahla

Environment Editor, Raseef 22

Sahar Mohammad

Project Assistant, Internews

Amine Derkaoui

Communication and Intelligence Manager, Climate Change Competence Centre
Maroc

Peter Schwartzstein

Environmental Journalist, Global Fellow, Wilson Center, Fellow, Center for Climate
and Security



Funded by
the European Union



Arab
Reform
Initiative



ALTERNATIVE
POLICY
SOLUTIONS



المعهد المغربي لتحليل السياسات
MOROCCAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS
٠٥٤١٠٧ ٠٤٢٥٤٥٤ | ٨٥٧٥٤ | +٥٥٠٠٦