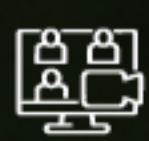


# AGENDA

## Third Annual Conference on **Conflict, Climate, and the Environment in the MENA Region**



Hybrid event



30 June - 1 July 2026



9:30 a.m - 4:00 p.m Istanbul time



Elite World İstanbul Taksim Hotel

Between 2024 and 2026, the MENA region witnessed intense armed conflicts and political crises, across several contexts, including Gaza, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. These conflicts have severely damaged the environment: contaminating natural resources and land, destroying environmental infrastructures, and undermining peoples' livelihoods. By destroying infrastructure, disrupting livelihoods, displacing populations, and weakening governance systems, conflict has reduced the capacity of states and communities to respond to environmental degradation. Meanwhile, efforts toward environmental recovery face major challenges, especially amid persistent political fragmentation, economic crises, reduced international funding, and institutional collapses.

This Third Annual Conference will devote special attention to post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, examining how environmental considerations can be integrated into rebuilding processes in countries emerging from conflict, particularly Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, and Gaza. The conference will also explore the growing role of Gulf countries in shaping reconstruction through investment, infrastructure development, and energy transition agendas at a time of major regional shifts. Gulf economies have themselves been affected by regional war, including through threats to energy security, food systems, and key infrastructure like desalination plants. These pressures will likely reshape the region as new infrastructure choices and economic integration models are explored, which will have major implications for the environmental recovery of the wider MENA region.

Adopting a comparative and cross-regional perspective, the conference will bring together experiences from the MENA region alongside lessons from Africa and Latin America, where societies have inherited similar environmental legacies of conflict, extractivism, displacement, and post-war recovery.

Organized by the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) and the Robert Bosch Stiftung (RBSG), the conference explores the nexus between conflict, climate change, environmental degradation and recovery in the MENA region. Drawing on experiences from across the region, the conference seeks to engage the discussions around governance, justice, and political economy.

Topics include legal debates around the emerging concept of ecocide, the impact of conflict on farmers and agricultural workers, commonalities and differences between the Iraqi and Syrian contexts, water transboundary dynamics and the implications of regional geopolitical conflicts in the MENA, the impact of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz on regional energy markets, and the practical use of GIS technology in times of conflict.

## DAY 1

09:00-09:30: Registration

09:30-09:45: Introductory Remarks by RBSG

09:45-11:15: Panel 1

**Rebuilding After War? Environmental Justice, Recovery, and Regional Cooperation in the Middle East: Cases from Syria and Iraq**

As neighbors, Syria and Iraq share a geography as well as a common history, marked in recent decades by a shared experience of civil conflict, foreign invasions and the deliberate destruction of the natural environment. While the causes and the dynamics of the conflicts in Syria and Iraq are distinct, there are several commonalities between the two countries regarding how the environment was impacted by conflict, especially with regards to water resources and to agriculture lands. There is an opportunity for dialogue and for cooperation between activists and stakeholders in both countries on knowledge sharing on how to address those common issues and on how to build and develop cooperation and coalitions between Iraqis and Syrians. Additionally, while Syria's

post conflict reconstruction and environmental recovery is in its early phases, Iraq is at a much more advanced stage, and there is here an opportunity for an exchange and discussion on the lessons learned from the Iraqi context. This panel will convene activists, researchers and academics from Iraq and Syria to discuss and to share perspective, knowledge and experience on the environmental impact of conflict and on post conflict reconstruction and recovery between both countries. Panelists will ask what can Syrians learn from Iraq's reconstruction efforts, how to form coalitions between both countries to share knowledge and strategies? How to encourage cooperation between both countries on issues related to the impact of conflict on the environment?

Moderator:



**Sarine Karajerjian**

Environmental Politics Program  
Director, Arab Reform Initiative

Speakers:



**Ansar Jasim**

PhD Candidate,  
Freie Universität Berlin



**Dellair Youssef**

Independent Syrian  
Journalist



**Bassam al Obaidi**

Program Officer,  
Hummat Dijla



**Kawthar AlMohammadi**

Founder and Executive  
Director, Soqya Foundation

11:15-11:30: Coffee Break

11:30-13:00: Panel 2

**Ecocide: From Environmental Reality to Legal Concept**

In recent years, there has been growing international momentum to recognize and pursue accountability for environmental harm inflicted during armed conflicts, an often-overlooked dimension of warfare with long-lasting consequences for ecosystems and humans. From the deliberate burning of agricultural land in Syria and Lebanon, to the destruction of wastewater treatment plants in Gaza, environmental degradation has increasingly become both a byproduct and a tactic of war in the MENA region. Similar patterns have been observed globally, with Ukraine explicitly invoking the term ecocide to describe the widespread environmental destruction caused by the Russian invasion, including the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam. These developments have renewed calls to strengthen legal protections for the environment in conflict zones, including efforts to formally recognize ecocide as an international crime under international law.

This session explores the evolving legal, ethical, and political debates surrounding accountability for environmental harm in war in MENA, comparing experiences across MENA, Ukraine, and beyond, and examining what mechanisms, both existing and emerging—can be leveraged to address these violations. It will also discuss the mechanisms that exist to document war induced eco-crimes, such as the Register for Damage Ukraine has created, which has compiled over 10 000 eco-crimes, and the role this could play in any potential legal action, post conflict recovery and rehabilitation.

This panel will bring together legal practitioners and environmental experts to critically examine the viability and usefulness of pursuing accountability for environmental harm through legal frameworks such as international humanitarian law, environmental law, and emerging ecocide proposals. Panelists will explore key questions: What forms of justice or redress are realistically

attainable for affected communities and ecosystems? What concrete legal, institutional, or advocacy developments have occurred since 2024 in efforts to strengthen accountability for environmental harm during armed conflict? Can mechanisms such as the Register for Damage in Ukraine be adopted elsewhere such as in Lebanon and Palestine and would it be adequate for those very different contexts? And how can the MENA region, with its unique environmental vulnerabilities and protracted conflicts, contribute to shaping global norms in this field, including what having MENA countries take a more proactive approach towards building ecocide type cases against those that have used environmental destruction as a weapon of war?

**Moderator:**



**Maud Sarlieve**

Head of the Secretariat of the Climate Research  
Forum, Oxford Sustainable Law Programme

**Speakers:**



**Rinata Kazak**

Lecturer,  
Linköping University



**Farah Imad**

Legal Researcher,  
Arab Protection of Nature



**Stavros-Evdokimos Pantazopoulos**

Teaching Fellow, National and Kapodistrian  
University of Athens School of Law



**Ali Swaidan**

Legal Researcher,  
Legal Agenda

13:00-14:30: Lunch Break

14:30-16:00: Panel 3

## Water Transboundary Issues Between Lebanon, Syria, Türkiye and Iraq

Water and control of water resources have long been a source of tension between different MENA countries. Between Türkiye and its southern neighbors Syria and Iraq, there are separate disputes over the sharing of the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, and between Syria and Lebanon there is a dispute over the sharing of the waters of the Orontes River. Those rivers are a shared resource shaped by both natural geography and political boundaries, and since the 1960's there have been uncoordinated efforts to initiate development projects (such as dams) which have negatively impacted relations between the different countries.

The construction of major dams in Türkiye on the Euphrates River (as part of the Southeastern Anatolia Project) has had significant repercussions for Syria and Iraq. Across the region, such projects, often developed with foreign funding and contractors, are often presented as solutions to local water shortages or economic challenges. But they also reflect a broader logic: one that sees water as a commodity to be controlled, maximized, and monetized, regardless of downstream impacts, or the rights of neighboring communities.

While over the years several agreements have been signed between those different countries to diminish tensions and to promote cooperation, there are concerns that many of those agreements were one sided and favored the interests of one party over the others. This has been the case, for example, with agreements signed between Syria and Lebanon in the 1990s and 2000s, including arrangements concerning the Orontes River, which some Lebanese actors have criticized for prioritizing Syrian interests and limiting Lebanon's ability to address its own water needs. Since the fall of the old regime in Syria in 2024, relations between Türkiye and Syria have improved, as have relations between Syria and Lebanon with the changes in the political order in Lebanon. This has shifted the dynamic between the

countries and opened new opportunities for renewed and more positive diplomatic relations, which could translate into more equitable and sustainable transboundary water relations.

The panel will explore how water resources become entangled with politics, war, and international development agendas and will ask: What kinds of water futures are being built in Iraq, Türkiye, Lebanon and in Syria, and for whom? How do regional power imbalances, international donors, and local elites shape the way water is governed and distributed? How can disputes over the sharing of water resources between those countries be resolved going forward given the new opportunities afforded by the shifts in political order in both countries?

**Moderator:**



**Mustafa Haid**

Independent Consultant

**Speakers:**



**Raya Stephan**

Water Law Expert, International Consultant,  
Editor in Chief Water International (IWRA)



**Ahmed Haj Asaad**

Geo Expertise, Geopolitics  
of Water & GIS Expert



**Zahraa Hamadeh**

Researcher



**Natasha Carmi**

Water Peace Programme Manager,  
WANA region, Geneva Water Hub

**16:00-16:15: Break**

**16:15-17:45 Panel 4**

## **The Strait of Hormuz Crisis: Energy Security, Food Systems, and Regional Adaptation**

The interruption of maritime trade through one of the world's most strategic chokepoints, coupled with attacks on energy infrastructure across the Gulf, has exposed the vulnerability of regional and global systems that depend on affordable energy, stable supply chains, and secure transportation routes. Global oil and gas prices have now severely risen, causing a rise in the cost of several key commodities including key assorted petroleum products and fertilizers.

The war also raised important questions about the future of energy and food systems in the Gulf and the MENA region. To what extent can existing infrastructure withstand geopolitical shocks? Which countries and social groups are bearing the greatest costs of the crisis, and how are these impacts distributed across the region? Has the crisis accelerated efforts to diversify economies and energy export routes, or reinforced dependence on existing fossil fuel systems?

The discussion will explore how energy disruptions affect food systems, water security, and environmental governance across the MENA region. It will also assess the mitigation strategies being pursued by Gulf States and ask what lessons this crisis offers for building more resilient, sustainable, and secure energy systems in an era increasingly shaped by conflict, climate change, and geopolitical uncertainty.

**Moderator:**



**Nadim Houry**

Executive Director,  
Arab Reform Initiative

**Speakers:**



**Dawud Ansari**

Founder and President, Shaheen  
Institute for Strategy and Development



**Dhabia M. Al Mohannadi**

Associate Professor, College of Science and  
Engineering, Hamad Bin Khalifa University



**Kanj Hamade**

Co-founder, Economic  
Development Solutions (EDS)

**DAY 2**

09:30-11:00: Panel 5

## Usages of GIS technology in analyzing the Nexus of Conflict, Climate and Environment in the MENA

Across MENA, public and private institutions are increasingly turning to Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to monitor the short- and long-term impacts of conflicts on the environment. GIS is an opportunity to gather crucial data that can be used to assess damage during conflict, to identify the specific actions committed by each armed belligerent, report potential war crimes, and support civilian protection efforts, including evacuation from conflict zones.

Through GIS, agencies and government can also detect forest fires, oil spills, mass graves, domicides, and signs of soil and water pollution, amongst others. The use of GIS technology informs policy on a local level by governmental and international agencies to devise plans and strategies, confront the environmental impact of a conflict, protect civilians and wildlife, and lay the groundwork for post conflict processes to reconstruct and rehabilitate the land, especially in contexts that have experienced very large scale destruction such as Gaza and Lebanon, where there are millions of tons of rubbles scattered around. On an international level it can also lay the foundation for eventual ecocide litigations, as the images could be used as evidence and as a basis to form a case.

This panel will gather GIS experts and practitioners from different parts of the MENA to discuss how they are using GIS in their own work in their respective countries and contexts, what are in their experience the practical outcomes of the use of such a technology during and after conflicts, what are its limitations from a technical, ethical and political perspective, and whether it can also be used to support post conflict environmental litigation?

**Moderator:**



**Hania Zaatari**

Civic Tech Developer and Consultant

**Speakers:**



**Rouba Ziade**

Associate Researcher, National Center for Natural Hazards and Early Warning, CNRS- Lebanon



**Jonathan Walsh**

Researcher, the Conflict and Environment Observatory



**Ahmad AL Sidani**

Information Management Coordinator, GIS Expert, Save the Children International



**Lina Eklund**

Associate Professor, Lund University

**11:00-11:30: Coffee Break**

11:30-13:00: Panel 6

## Farmers, Food Sovereignty, and the Human Cost of Conflict

Across the MENA region, farmers and agricultural workers stand at the intersection of conflict and environmental degradations. Wars have destroyed agricultural lands, disrupted food production systems, displaced rural populations, and undermined livelihoods on a massive scale. In some contexts, such as Sudan, agricultural communities have been deliberately targeted as part of broader strategies aimed at controlling territory, disrupting food systems, and weaponizing hunger.

Despite their central role in ensuring food sovereignty and sustaining rural economies, farmers and agricultural workers are often absent from policy discussions on conflict, recovery, and agricultural development. Many belong to marginalized groups, including refugees, seasonal workers, landless laborers, and informal workers, whose rights and interests remain poorly represented. As agricultural systems collapse, millions face unemployment, displacement, and growing social vulnerability, yet farmers are not only victims of conflict; they are also critical actors in recovery and reconstruction. Reviving agricultural production, restoring livelihoods, and rebuilding food systems will be essential components of any sustainable recovery effort. This requires moving beyond technical discussions of food production to address questions of labor rights, social protection, land access, representation, and rural justice.

This panel will examine how conflict, environmental degradation, and climate change are reshaping the lives and livelihoods of farmers and agricultural workers across the region. It will explore who bears the costs of agricultural collapse, whose voices are excluded from recovery planning, and what policies are needed to protect rural communities before, during, and after conflict.

Moderator:



**Abeer Al Butmeh**  
PENGON Coordinator

Speakers:



**Abdalaziz Alsalehi**  
Independent Researcher



**Kindah Ibrahim**  
Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Researcher



**Corinne Jabbour**  
Project Manager, Program Coordinator, Permaculture, Jibal



**Muez Ali**  
Research and Policy Associate, Earthna, Qatar Foundation

13:00-14:30: Lunch Break

14:30-16:30: Panel 7

**Lessons and Experiences from Beyond MENA:  
Documenting Conflict-Driven Environmental Destruction**

Communities affected by conflict are increasingly developing innovative methods to document environmental destruction, preserve evidence, pursue accountability, and integrate environmental concerns into reconstruction and transitional justice processes. While these efforts have gained growing attention in the MENA region,

valuable lessons can also be drawn from experiences in Africa and Latin America, where civil society organizations, researchers, Indigenous communities, and environmental defenders have spent decades documenting the environmental legacies of violence, extractivism, and armed conflict.

This session will explore practical strategies, tools, and coalitions that have successfully translated environmental documentation into policy change, legal action, community mobilization, and post-conflict recovery initiatives. The session will feature series of interventions from speakers representing different regional experiences.

**Moderator & Speaker:**



**Rodrigo Yáñez Rojas**

Researcher, RIMISP

**Speakers:**



**Ukoha Ukiwo**

Team Leader, Strengthening  
Peace and Resilience in Nigeria



**Negasi Solomon**

Lead Researcher, Tigray  
Institute of Policy Studies



**Ricardo Fort**

Senior Researcher, Group  
for the Analysis of Development