



The Tahrir Institute  
for Middle East Policy



# Annual Report 2017

The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP), a nonpartisan and nonprofit organization, is dedicated to understanding and supporting Middle Eastern countries undergoing democratic transitions and committed to informing international policymakers and the public of developments in these countries.

TIMEP is fully registered and acknowledged under Section 501(c)(3) in the District of Columbia.

For more information about TIMEP's mission, programming, or upcoming events, please visit [timep.org](http://timep.org). This report is the product of the collaborative efforts of TIMEP staff and fellows.

# CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Influencing Policy	5
Highlighting Local Voices	8
Expanding Our Reach	10
Producing Rigorous Analysis	14
Notable Highlights	17
Board of Advisors	18

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2017 was marked by continued volatility in the Middle East and North Africa region, including an alarming crackdown on rights and freedoms and civil society that has corresponded with growing security challenges. In the face of these challenges, the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) remains committed to influencing policy toward the region through rigorous research and targeted advocacy efforts that promote local voices. The institute has successfully positioned itself as a leading authority in its areas of work and continues to be sought out by prestigious media outlets for nuanced and rapid analysis on developments in the region. This year so far, TIMEP's experts have been featured more than **350 times** in international journals, newswires, and television programs such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Guardian*, and NBC. Furthermore, TIMEP continues to be sought out by leading institutions to participate at prominent events, and this year TIMEP's experts were featured **at more than 30 events** across the United States and Europe.

TIMEP's rigorous research provides documentation, analysis, and evidence for well-founded policy recommendations. In 2017 TIMEP's research team continued to produce long-term, evidence-based research that forms the basis of all of the institute's knowledge production. Informed by its ongoing research, TIMEP was able to expand its development of rapid-response briefings that provide comprehensive coverage of unfolding events or critical issues and offer a policy perspective. Following the attack on the Sufi Rawda mosque in November, one of the deadliest terror attacks in Egypt's history, TIMEP's team immediately produced a statement offering context and analysis to leading media outlets such as CNN, the *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*.

To inform its research and advocacy, TIMEP relies on local voices from the region. To this end, in 2017 the institute engaged with 12 new contributors including eight on the ground in the region, while welcoming to its team **six new nonresident fellows** who bring expert insight and local perspectives. Our nonresident fellows have contributed 16 analysis pieces this year so far, and their contributions go further than this, as their work informs the institute's expert knowledge, upon which we build our advocacy position and efforts. Through these fellowships, TIMEP is also able to provide support to those doing critical work on the ground, often with little means, as a result of asset freezes and other restrictions.

Through its advocacy efforts, TIMEP delivers its message and informed recommendations to policy-making audiences. This year, TIMEP successfully implemented a new advocacy strategy that more heavily involves European policymakers, recognizing this group as an important audience and ally in advancing TIMEP's mission. The institute established new relationships with 25 European policymakers and TIMEP's Executive Director brought the institute's work straight to this audience through workshops held specifically for European Union and NATO officials.

## INFLUENCING POLICY

In the first half of 2017, TIMEP continued to expand and adjust its advocacy to achieve its mission nationally and internationally. In addition to TIMEP's advocacy efforts in the United States, and in light of the new U.S. administration, a main component of this involved expanding the focus toward European policymakers and organizations, which has been complemented by the opening of TIMEP Europe in Brussels. TIMEP also continued to seek out new contacts and allies within domestic and foreign governments, international organizations, and civil society, and utilized different mediums to reach these target audiences.

In the United States, TIMEP continued to build new relationships in the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Department of Defense. Over half of TIMEP's meetings with these departments were with new contacts.

- From 2016, TIMEP's advocacy meetings increased by 33 percent.

TIMEP Senior Fellow Hassan Hassan presented his expertise on countering terrorist groups in Syria directly to Congress, through his testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade.

Developments in Egypt this year prompted TIMEP to both draft and cosponsor press releases encouraging the Egyptian government and international community to address human rights concerns in Egypt. Public response to key policy developments such as the passage of Egypt's NGO Law allows TIMEP to demonstrate both its credibility and responsiveness within the policymaking community. Moreover, such statements provide valuable collaboration opportunities with peer organizations.

- A meeting between German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi prompted TIMEP to join a coalition of other organizations to write a letter to Merkel, detailing ongoing human rights concerns under Sisi's government and why the chancellor must address these issues.
- TIMEP Europe Director Koert Debeuf signed a second open letter to Merkel, drafted by the European Working Group on Egypt in cooperation with the European Council on Foreign Relations and the International Crisis Group.
- The ratification of the NGO Law, which severely curtailed the functioning of nongovernmental organizations in Egypt, prompted a number of civil rights organizations, including TIMEP, to issue a joint statement condemning the ratification.

## INFLUENCING POLICY

- With other international human rights organizations, TIMEP participated in a letter to the U.N. Human Rights Council for its 36th meeting in September 2017. The letter called for the council to pass a resolution by its next session in September addressing the human rights crisis in Egypt.
- After major national and international news outlets were blocked by the Egyptian government, TIMEP signed a joint statement condemning the censorship.



In January, TIMEP published an extensive report, “Combating al-Qaeda in Syria: A Strategy for the Next President,” as the culmination of six months of regular meetings of the Combating al-Qaeda in Syria Working Group. This group of Syria, Middle East, and U.S. national security experts convened throughout the latter half of 2016 to analyze the challenge presented by al-Qaeda in Syria and formulate recommendations for the new U.S. administration.

As part of TIMEP’s efforts to solidify and build new relationships with the European policymaking community, TIMEP’s leadership met with 25 policymakers and officials from European governments including the United Kingdom, Germany, and Lithuania, in addition to seven European Union representatives. Over half of TIMEP’s advocacy meetings were conducted with international policymakers.

- Complementing these efforts, the TIMEP Europe Director, Koert Debeuf, held advocacy meetings with policymakers in a variety of positions, including the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Belgian parliament and Dutch members of parliament.

TIMEP’s Executive Director brought TIMEP’s insight and perspective directly to NATO officials during a workshop in Brussels this summer.

## INFLUENCING POLICY

Bringing TIMEP's expertise to the United Nations, Executive Director Nancy Okail returned to Geneva in June to participate in an event on the side of the 35th session of the U.N. Human Rights Council, focusing on the crackdown on civil society in Egypt.

- TIMEP's Advocacy Manager participated at a side event on the Convention Against Torture, sponsored by Danish NGO Dignity, alongside Egyptian NGOs El Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture and the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms.

On a joint advocacy initiative in Brussels, TIMEP U.S. and TIMEP Europe team members connected with officials from the E.U., NATO, and members of the European Parliament to share TIMEP's work.

TIMEP's Executive Director participated in a workshop for the E.U. External Action Service, consulting with the organization on shaping the next partnership agreement between the E.U. and Egypt.



## HIGHLIGHTING LOCAL VOICES

To further TIMEP's mission of elevating local voices, the institute seeks to provide a platform for local contributors through its online publications. The institute featured **12 new contributors**, including **eight local voices** from the region, since January. Additionally, TIMEP relies on nonresident fellows from the region to bring a unique and informed perspective to the institute's work, ensuring that TIMEP's research and advocacy are grounded in local knowledge. TIMEP was able to expand its nonresident fellowship program in 2017, welcoming six new fellows to the team, including those facing repressive conditions on the ground.

To continue to diversify its team and bring on experts from the region, TIMEP welcomed six new nonresident fellows this year.



- Osama Diab offers expertise on economy and development. Mr. Diab is a researcher, advocate, and campaigner at the Egypt Initiative for Personal Rights, and is currently completing a Ph.D. in political science at Ghent University in Belgium.



- Sherif Azer provides support to TIMEP's work on freedoms and human rights. Mr. Azer is an Egyptian human rights activist and defender, and the assistant secretary-general of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights.



- Kamal Chomani is a Kurdish political analyst writing on Kurdish political affairs. He cofounded the Kurdish Policy Foundation in 2014.



- Sherif MohyEldeen is an Egyptian researcher on security and political sociology, and currently a master's degree candidate at Durham University.

Responding to developments in the region, TIMEP's nonresident fellows provided important analysis, rooted in local knowledge and their substantial expertise. Nonresident fellows contributed 16 commentary pieces in 2017 on topics including the death penalty in Egypt, IMF investments, and Egypt's ad campaign to increase investment in the country.

Seeking out new local voices, TIMEP engaged eight new contributors from the region.

- Bilal Alaa, an Egyptian journalist, wrote his first commentary for TIMEP on the U.S. airstrike on the Shayrat airfield in Syria and the ramifications of this strike.

- A correspondent in Sinai interviewed a number of residents in North Sinai regarding a sudden exodus of Coptic Christian families from the region.

- Taha Saker, a reporter for *Daily News Egypt*, explored civil unrest in Arish after a state-led security operation in North Sinai.

## HIGHLIGHTING LOCAL VOICES

- Magda Adly, cofounder of El Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, wrote on the ramifications of closing the center.
- Bassem Z. Alsamragy, an M.A. candidate at the American University in Cairo, analyzed the significance of January 28, 2011, days after the start of the well-known January 25 Revolution.
- Amr Ezzat, a researcher at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, wrote a two-part piece on efforts by the government to limit freedom of religion.
- Omnia Khalil, a cofounder of 10 Tooba: Applied Research in the Built Environment in Egypt and adjunct lecturer at Hunter College, wrote for TIMEP on the future of al-Warraq and the violence that has ensued on the island.
- Dalia Rabie, a cofounder of Mada Masr, analyzed U.S.-Egypt relations in light of the recent decision to withhold and delay aid to Egypt.

After concluding the review process for its fourth Bassem Sabry Democracy Fellowship, TIMEP was excited to welcome Aymen Abderrahmen to the institute in June. TIMEP was pleased to see growing interest in the fellowship, demonstrated by a 70 percent increase in applications for the fellowship, compared to the previous period.

- Mr. Abderrahmen joined us from Tunisia, where he worked on media development projects in the MENA region. At TIMEP, he contributed his background and expertise on transitional justice in Tunisia and Libya.

By hosting a Libya Policy Forum event, TIMEP connected with key activists, scholars, and practitioners in Libya, particularly those working in human rights documentation, local reconciliation efforts, and state-society relations, providing them a platform to present their research initiatives directly to policymakers.

## EXPANDING OUR REACH

TIMEP continues to succeed in building a diverse, global network that relies on the institute's work and experts as a dependable source of information. Throughout 2017, TIMEP staff and fellows carried TIMEP's message to audiences, both old and new, around the world, through external appearances and a range of media features.

TIMEP staff and fellows were mentioned **350 times** in national and international media outlets over the first half of the year, including some of the world's leading agencies and journals such as the *New York Times*, Reuters, and CNN. These outlets represented 29 different countries and 16 languages of publication.

- In addition to regular features in online journals, TIMEP was also featured in documentaries, television interviews, radio broadcasts, and podcasts.
- TIMEP Senior Fellow Hassan Hassan appeared in a new documentary from HISTORY, *The New Age of Terror*.

At the annual Concordia Summit, TIMEP cohosted a plenary session with the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, a human rights advocacy organization. The session, "Freedoms, Diplomacy, and Human Rights in the Middle East," explored the space for civil society and crackdowns on human rights throughout the region.



Photos, top to bottom: TIMEP Senior Fellow Hassan Hassan speaks on the International Republican Institute's "Global Podcast"; TIMEP's Executive Director discusses "Freedoms, Diplomacy, and Human Rights in the Middle East" with Aya Hijazi, Bassem Youssef, and moderator Michael Crowley at the 2017 annual Concordia Summit; TIMEP Senior Fellow Hassan Hassan on French news network F24 for a live debate.

## EXPANDING OUR REACH

- The panel featured Aya Hijazi, president of Belady – Island for Humanity; Bassem Youssef, managing director of QSB and former host of al-Bernameg, and TIMEP Executive Director Nancy Okail.

In February, TIMEP organized a panel at the International Studies Association (ISA) Conference. This was TIMEP's first hosted panel at an academic conference, which provided a platform for TIMEP to reach new academic audiences.

TIMEP cohosted an event, "Egypt: Seven Years Forward," with the London Middle East Institute at School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, featuring Professor Khaled Fahmy, TIMEP Nonresident Fellow Mohamed Adam, and TIMEP Executive Director Nancy Okail.

TIMEP was pleased to host author Jack Shenker for the institute's first public event of the year, a conversation on his book *The Egyptians: A Radical History of Egypt's Unfinished Revolution* and the overall political climate in Egypt.

Bringing TIMEP's expertise to European audiences, Executive Director Nancy Okail was featured as a leading speaker at a variety of events and conferences across the continent, including the following:

- The E.U.-Arab World Summit in Athens, which featured more than 90 speakers, including heads of state, and was attended by over 1,000 attendees.
- An Amnesty International U.K. event in London, speaking on a panel titled "Human Rights Defenders Under Threat," which drew over 250 attendees.
- Two presentations at King's College in London on the topics of Egypt's connections to regional terrorism and rising sectarian violence in Egypt.
- The Reset Dialogue on Civilization (Reset DOC) Seminars, held in Venice, participating with other prominent scholars in a roundtable titled "Global Authoritarianism and the Future of Democracy."



Photo: Executive Director Nancy Okail speaks at the E.U.-Arab World Summit in Athens.

## EXPANDING OUR REACH

- An event in Paris hosted by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and the Institut de Recherche et d'Études Méditerranée Moyen-Orient held in Paris, on the ongoing crackdown in Egypt within the context of the France-Egypt relationship.
- The Delphi Economic Forum II in Greece, an event aimed at involving civil society, businesses, individuals, and public organizations in efforts to develop successful policies for Greece and the larger Eastern Mediterranean region.
- A workshop hosted by EuroMed with European and Mediterranean region civil society members on upholding norms of civil society and human rights.
- The European Parliament, where Dr. Okail was joined by TIMEP Europe Director Koert Debeuf to present TIMEP's report on combating al-Qaeda in Syria.

TIMEP Senior Fellow Hassan Hassan was frequently sought out for his expertise on the Islamic State and Syria. He was featured as a panelist at a variety of events including the following:

- A panel at the “American Forum for Syria Policy” on “Combating Violent Extremism and Terrorism in Syria”
- At a panel for a conference hosted by the Bipartisan Policy Center titled “After Raqqa – The Future of Terrorism.”
- A panel at the United States Institute of Peace, “Raqqa After the Islamic State: Governance Challenges in Post-ISIS Syria.”
- A talk on “Failed Governance, Authoritarianism, and Salafi Jihadism in the Middle East and North Africa: Exploring the Connections” for the Fall 2017 Project on Middle East Democracy Seminar Series.
- A panel hosted by the Program on Extremism at George Washington University on “Iraq and Syria after the Caliphate: The future of IS.”
- Panels at the SETA Foundation on “Turkey and the Middle East under the Trump Administration” and “The Geneva Process: Toward a Political Solution in Syria.”

## EXPANDING OUR REACH

Reaching new audiences at prominent universities, Dr. Okail spoke at the John Sloane Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth University, while Research Director Allison McManus gave four presentations on foreign policy in the Middle East at schools including the University of California at Santa Barbara and the University of Southern California.

- TIMEP's Advocacy Director additionally spoke on "The Struggle for Civil Society in the Middle East and North Africa: The cases of Lebanon and Egypt" to students at Susquehanna University.

TIMEP Nonresident Fellow Mai El-Sadany was a featured panelist at the event "Arab Constitutions in the 21st Century," hosted by Arab Center DC. The event explored how human rights protections are integrated into constitutions of post-Arab Spring states.

TIMEP Bassem Sabry Fellow Aymen Abderrahmen spoke at a launch for the paper "The Geographic Trajectory of Conflict and Militancy in Tunisia" hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

At a Carnegie Endowment for International Peace conference in Washington, DC, Dr. Okail spoke on the panel, "Security Challenges and Governance: Egypt, Morocco, and Yemen."



## PRODUCING RIGOROUS ANALYSIS

An integral component of TIMEP’s mission is driving policy discussion through the production of nuanced, evidence-based research and analysis. TIMEP prides itself on this signature approach, devising research projects that adopt tailored methodologies relying on documentation and data collection to answer complex policy questions. In addition to its longer-form research products, in 2017 TIMEP dedicated efforts to increasing the production of rapid response briefings to quickly respond to unfolding events. So far in 2017, the institute has published 23 policy-oriented documents that leverage TIMEP’s original knowledge production and expert analysis.

### SYRIA'S WOMEN: POLICIES & PERSPECTIVES

in partnership with News Deeply



In August, TIMEP launched Syria’s Women: Policies and Perspectives, a partnership with News Deeply. This six-part series aimed to disrupt narratives of victimhood and critically analyze issues facing Syrian women and subsequent policy implications through in-depth multimedia reports and policy briefs.

- Throughout the course of the project, TIMEP published nine briefs to accompany Syria Deeply’s reports. The published briefs have covered issues including access to education, access to healthcare, violence against women, women in security forces, and women in media.

TIMEP published “Tiran and Sanafir: Developments, Dynamics, and Implications,” a report that documents historical context and background on the decision to cede the Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia. The report presents official positions and responses to this decision, analyzes the judicial and legal processes, and offers a political analysis of the agreement and its ramifications on domestic affairs and geopolitics.

Marking six years after the Egyptian revolution, the TIMEP team released a report, “A Fragile Egypt in a Changing World: Six Years After the Revolution.” The report presented background, analysis, and policy recommendations about a wide range of issues that must be addressed to support human rights and freedoms in Egypt.

Providing ongoing coverage of Egypt’s Parliament, TIMEP launched the Egypt Parliament Watch Weekly Brief in October, which summarizes developments from the previous week in Egypt’s parliament, and provides a look ahead at parliament’s upcoming agenda.

- Earlier in the year, TIMEP released “Egypt Parliament Watch: Mid-Session Report, October 2016–May 2017.” This progress report outlined parliament activity in its second session and evaluates its performance.

## PRODUCING RIGOROUS ANALYSIS

TIMEP's Egypt Security Watch published its report for the first quarter of 2017, providing insight and analysis on security threats in Egypt between January and March of 2017.

Quickly responding to developments on the ground in the region, TIMEP published both special briefings and issue briefs for context and analysis.

- Following the horrific attack on the Rawda mosque in North Sinai , TIMEP published a special briefing which contextualizes the attack and offers analysis of its implications for Egypt's security landscape, sectarianism, and global efforts to combat terrorism.
- After an attack on a convoy of Egyptian security personnel attempting a counter-terror r raid near Bahariya Oasis, TIMEP published a special briefing on the incident. The special briefing discusses recent developments on details of the attack and provides its context within the war on terror in Egypt.
- TIMEP developed a special briefing, a joint product of the Eshhad and Egypt Security Watch projects, in response to attacks on Christians in Arish. TIMEP produced a subsequent briefing to contextualize the Palm Sunday twin bombs in Alexandria and Tanta, Egypt. These briefings detailed causes and implications for sectarian violence, current legal framework, and policy recommendations.
- After President Donald Trump signed the Omnibus Appropriations bill for the 2017 fiscal year, TIMEP's research team prepared a briefing detailing the consequences of the bill on U.S. aid to Egypt.
- TIMEP compiled a briefing on European arms sales to Egypt, reflecting changes in the global arms market. This briefing discussed the significance of the shifting arms supplier market.
- Deteriorating conditions for press freedom in Egypt prompted the TIMEP team to compile a briefing to provide context on the situation for journalists and media outlets in the country.
- TIMEP published a special briefing on the security situation in Egypt after an attack in Sinai killed 18 Egyptian police personnel.
- Following the announcement of the reprogramming of U.S. aid to Egypt, TIMEP published a special briefing, "Developments in the U.S.-Egypt Aid Relationship," detailing the current and future allocations of aid.
- TIMEP's brief "Torture in Egyptian Detention Centers" addressed methods of systematic torture and mistreatment of detainees in Egyptian detention centers.

## PRODUCING RIGOROUS ANALYSIS

At TIMEP's panel "Security in Egypt After June 30, 2013: A Range of Perspectives" at the 2017 ISA conference, members of TIMEP's team and external academics presented papers looking at security in Egypt and its intersection with foreign policy, human rights, and sectarianism, highlighting TIMEP's diversity of research coverage.

- TIMEP Senior Fellow Hassan Hassan presented his research findings on the evolution of the Islamic State's ideology at a separate panel at the ISA conference.

Reflecting the credibility of the institute's research, data from TIMEP's Egypt Security Watch and Eshhad projects were cited in leading international news outlets and used by prominent civil society organizations. Egypt Security Watch data was cited in pieces published by the *New York Times*, Mada Masr, Newsweek Middle East, Human Rights Watch, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Reaching regional, Arabic-language audiences, TIMEP published its first report in Arabic, TIMEP's Egyptian Parliament Watch Session 1 (January–October 2016) Report. Publishing in Arabic allows TIMEP to share our research with a broader range of readers in the region.

- Brad Youngblood and Mohamed Adam also published an article in Arabic on the role of the Egyptian parliament for Mada Masr, a leading news outlet in Egypt.

## NOTABLE HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to its outward-facing initiatives, TIMEP continues to seek ways to grow the organization by building its team, securing funding, and developing its institutional programs.

- TIMEP welcomed two new full-time staff this year.
  - In July, Lindsay Carroll joined the institute as the first Copy Editor. Ms. Carroll is an editor who lived and worked in the Middle East from 2010 to 2017. She was a senior copy editor at Egypt Independent, helped set up the news website Mada Masr, and was a senior national news editor at the National in Abu Dhabi.
  - In March, TIMEP welcomed Aliza Asad as the institute's Programs Assistant. Prior to joining TIMEP, Ms. Asad interned at the Middle East Institute and lived in Turkey to conduct research on healthcare access for refugees.
- TIMEP hosted **20 interns during 2017**. The interns joined TIMEP from a variety of schools including Stanford University, American University in Beirut, and the University of Southern California.
- TIMEP attended six career and internship fairs this year, hosted by American University, George Washington University, and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. TIMEP staff engaged with undergraduate and graduate students offering information about the institute and its internship program.



Photo: TIMEP booth at the American University Spring Internship Fair.

## BOARD OF ADVISORS

**Ziad Asali, M.D.**

President and Founder,  
American Task Force on Palestine

**Dr. Graeme Bannerman**

Founder,  
Bannerman Associates

**Dr. Larry Diamond**

Senior Fellow,  
Hoover Institution and Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University

**Adam Erel**

Vice Chairman,  
Mercury

**Dr. Francis Fukuyama**

Professor,  
Stanford University

**Sultan Al Qassemi**

UAE-based commentator

**Dr. Nagla Rizk**

Professor of Economics and Founding Director  
of the Access to Knowledge for Development Center, American University in Cairo

**Marietje Schaake**

Member, European Parliament,  
Dutch Democratic Party

**Ghada Shahbender**

Founding member,  
Shayfeencom (“We Are Watching You”)

**Alex Shalaby**

Chairman,  
TIMEP Board of Advisors



The Tahrir Institute  
for Middle East Policy

1140 Connecticut Ave NW • Suite 505 • Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 969-3343 • [www.timep.org](http://www.timep.org) • [info@timep.org](mailto:info@timep.org)

