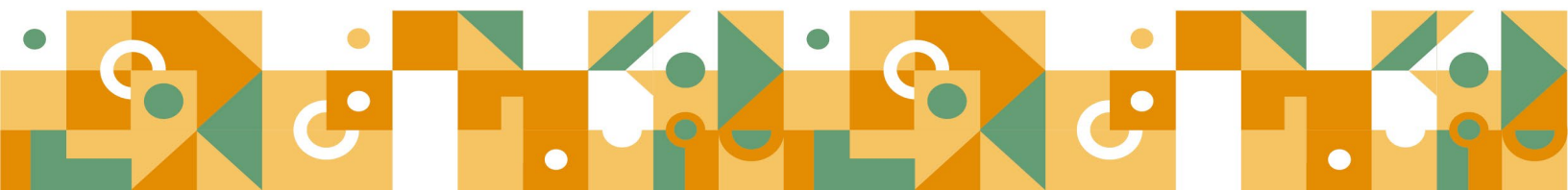




THE TAHRIR INSTITUTE  
FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY

*TIMER*  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2023**



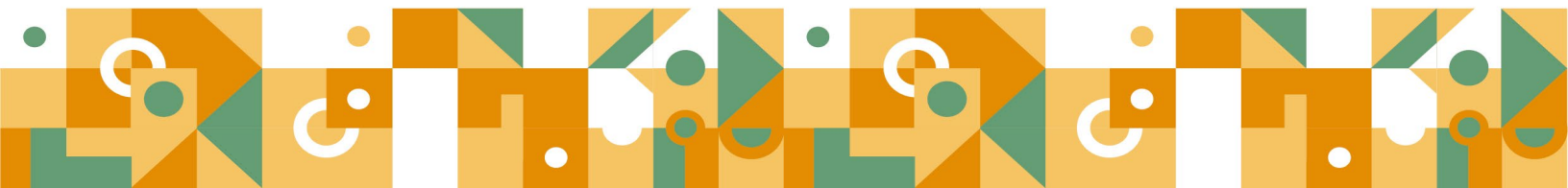
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The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) centers localized perspectives in the policy discourse to foster transparent, accountable, and just societies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

TIMEP was founded in 2013 and is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a network of expert fellows and partners located on the ground in the Middle East and North Africa and throughout the world. TIMEP is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit in the District of Columbia.

For more information about TIMEP's mission, programming, or upcoming events, please visit [timep.org](http://timep.org).

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2023 was a difficult one for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. With wars breaking out in Sudan and Gaza; economic crises intensifying in Tunisia and Egypt; and state failure in Lebanon and Syria, the challenges facing the region's people were significant and further exacerbated by a shaken confidence in the so-called "international rules-based order" on a global scale.

Yet in these moments of significant challenge, the greatest hope for the region also came from its people, committed as ever to claiming their own narrative, advancing innovative solutions and ideas, and standing together in community and solidarity. It is in this context that the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP) marked the 10 year anniversary since its founding and headed into its second decade of operations.

In 2023, TIMEP reiterated its commitment to the very mission upon which it was founded: to serve as a hub for a diverse, dynamic, and responsive community of advocates inside the MENA region and around the world—those best positioned not only to understand and analyze policy, but also to shape it.

It did so by curating and amplifying insightful analysis in English, while growing its Arabic content to reach new audiences, filling a gap amid the shuttering of platforms inside the region and breaking down language barriers in the policy space. It convened partners and allies for solutions-oriented conversations, roundtables, and events, and it cultivated informal and formal

networks for regional exchange, learning, and collaboration. It invested in the next generation of changemakers through fellowships, internships, and practical training opportunities. It created spaces for those most impacted to inform and influence the policy discussions in regional and in-country spaces, with Global North governments, and at the international level. And it brought together advocates and lawyers to re-envision legal frameworks, to carve out new pathways to accountability, and to put forward tangible and practical reform proposals grounded in respect for the rights of the region's people.

Whether across its work across the institute's five priority countries—Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan, Syria, and Lebanon—or in Gaza, where TIMEP is programming on an exceptional basis in light of the war's significance to the region and its people, TIMEP remained true to a simple premise: Centering the voices of experts and advocates from and in the MENA region not only delivers on policy that is more ethical, but also more effective.

As we look to the year ahead and beyond, the institute, its growing staff, and its dynamic alumni, partners, and allies are collectively committed more than ever to cultivating a community that can respond to the challenges of the moment, be it war, political crisis, or natural disaster. Even in the darkest moments, this investment in human capital and in the capacity and potential of the generations to come promises to serve as a tangible contribution that cannot be undone.



## ANALYSIS

*Protesters hold torches and nooses, which have become symbols of public anger toward the Lebanese government after the Beirut port blast, Beirut, on September 4, 2020. (Photo by Marwan Tahtah/Getty Images)*

In 2023, TIMEP's editorial department published 101 new articles, in both English and Arabic. Throughout the year, the department worked with several regular contributors and experts from around the MENA region, who shared their expertise on various topics such as internal Syrian politics, Egypt's urban development, or the crackdown on political activists in Tunisia. The editorial team also worked with some first-time authors, giving them in-depth training, support, and the opportunity to publish with a policy-facing platform like TIMEP. In addition, several of the editorial department's contributors joined the nonresident fellowship cohort after they had published articles with TIMEP. These included nonresident fellows from Lebanon, Tunisia, and Egypt.

The year 2023 saw an overall worsening of the political and economic crises plaguing the MENA region, which were reflected by the topics and themes covered by the editorial department.

Three events took center stage in the coverage and were prioritized given their widespread implication on the region and the extent of the humanitarian and human catastrophe: the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, the war in Sudan, and the war on Gaza.

The earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria on February 6 deeply impacted some of TIMEP's colleagues and contributors. The institute platformed analysis on the issue through various lenses: [the personal angle](#) with a detailed account of the devastation; the analytical angle, contextualizing the [political and economic situation in Northwest Syria](#); and the policy angle, with a detailed overview of how Syria's [healthcare sector](#) is in shambles.

Even before the war started in April 2023, Sudan was one of the editorial department's main priorities, and the focus on the country only intensified in the months thereafter.

Tensions had been rising in the first few months of 2023 when experts with whom TIMEP collaborated were sounding the alarm. TIMEP published articles that [detailed the positioning of the two generals](#) who would go on to launch the war some months later, the [political impasse](#) in the country and how civilian pro-democracy groups were cast aside from any political agreements, and the slow process of the [political framework agreement](#).

Several articles were published by TIMEP after the war began, including one [detailing the situation](#) in Khartoum 10 days after the fighting started and another about the [RSF leader's financial powers](#). A special focus was given to Darfur, given the horrendous exactions taking place there, including articles about West Darfur's capital [Al-Geneina](#) with testimonies from victims of the atrocities, and on the [humanitarian and political implications](#) of the war expanding in the area.

The war on Gaza led the editorial department to carve out an exceptional focus, due to its impact on several of TIMEP's priority countries—Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria—and for its emotional toll on contributors themselves working in or on the MENA region. TIMEP was able to leverage the experience and expertise that it had gathered by working on the rest of the region to complement the coverage and analysis of the war with a unique value-add.



Flames rise on a roadside near the border village of Burj Al-Mamluk in southern Lebanon's Kham plain following Israeli bombardment on November 9, 2023. (Photo by HASSAN FNEICH/AFP via Getty Images)

For instance, TIMEP published a thorough and deeply researched piece on the [warfare](#) waged against Gaza's healthcare sector, as well as an analysis on [how tech giants](#) have failed to protect users and have been biased in their coverage of the war.

The war has also had repercussions on neighboring countries: TIMEP published pieces on [Israel's environmental warfare](#) with its use of white phosphorus in South Lebanon, destroying agricultural lands and the environment for the years to come; how Israel's actions in Gaza have emboldened Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria; and how the war has caused [Egyptians to take the streets](#) for the first time in years.



A man sits at a stall in a street market at Meroe some 350 kilometers north of Khartoum on August 15, 2023. (Photo by AFP via Getty Images)

Refugees and migrants' rights have also been one of TIMEP's priorities in 2023. As the Assad regime further pushes for normalization with the international community, more and more countries are pushing anti-Syrian refugee narratives and are calling for refugees to be deported back to Syria, despite the dangers they face. TIMEP published several analysis pieces on the matter, including on how Syrian refugees have [been scapegoated by Turkey's political establishment and citizens](#) alike; which refugees the [Assad regime prefers to have return](#); and how in Lebanon, [refugees face forced deportation](#) and are the victims of hate speech. The situation of refugees and migrants has severely deteriorated in Tunisia as well, encouraged by President Kais Saied's fear mongering against migrants. Several articles were published on this topic, including on the pervasive [anti-blackness sentiment](#) in Tunisia; the country's [outdated migration laws](#) and vague procedures that make it hard to obtain visas in general; the [national but also international causes](#) of the deteriorating migration crisis, putting migrants in an even more precarious position; and the [role of the EU's border externalization](#) policy that has many negative human rights implications.

In line with other work across the institute, accountability was another of TIMEP's main

themes in 2023. Contributors wrote about how justice should be at the [forefront of any peace process](#) in Sudan instead of it being an afterthought like in previous wars and crises; about the [role of the ICC](#) in investigating the genocide in Darfur and its [investigation on violence in Gaza](#) launched in 2021; and about the [International Court of Justice's proceedings](#) against Syria. In Lebanon, two investigations are at a standstill, with no end in sight. Concerning the inquiry into the Beirut port blast, [various legal tactics](#) were used by political leaders to suspend the investigation with the support of [former public prosecutor Ghassan Oueidat](#). As for Lebanon's financial collapse, TIMEP published an explainer [about Interpol](#) issuing red notices against the country's former central bank governor for financial crimes, which were ignored.

The economic crises affecting several of TIMEP's priority countries these last few years have been another area of focus. Contributors covered informality and exploitation in [Lebanon's labor market](#) and on the need for proper [social protection](#) programs in the country; the [IMF's new program in Egypt](#) while contextualizing its previous failures in the country; the possibility of [Algeria joining BRICS](#); and a critique of the [IMF's flawed approach](#) in the MENA region, and how the financial institution could do better.



Tombstones lined up against a wall in the historic Ein al-Sera cemetery in Cairo, on June 16, 2023. (Photo by KHALED DESOUKI/AFP via Getty Images)



Families and relatives of those people arrested during anti-government protesters in Tripoli, Beqaa, and Beirut protest in the streets of Beirut, on February 24, 2021. (Photo by Diego Ibarra Sanchez/Getty Images)

Several countries in the region have used more creative legal tools to stifle any opposing voice. Among those are cybercrime laws such as Jordan's [latest cybercrime law](#), or the use in Tunisia of [Decree 54](#)—the country's cybercrime law—and [other decrees and laws](#) to arrest and prosecute dissenting voices.

Gender and queer identities was also another important topic for TIMEP, with a special focus on cross-national analysis of the situation, such as how the Arab world's intersex people are [made invisible in the region](#) through various laws and norms, or how the queer communities are [targeted online](#) through social media, blackmailing, arrests, and persecution.

Stemming from an institutional commitment to engage Arabic-reading audiences and policymakers, TIMEP strategically published several analysis pieces and explainers in Arabic covering selected issues. The theme of state repression of [prisoners](#) and their [families](#), a deeply personal issue, was a central focus in our coverage of Egypt. Advocates who, as former

political prisoners, have firsthand [experience](#) with the penal system, authored several pieces on the topic.

TIMEP also delved into the dismal state of personal and public freedoms, including security control of the [media](#), and [journalists](#), and [religious discrimination](#) in school curricula in Egypt. As significant developments unfolded in Syria, TIMEP was quick to respond, providing timely and crucial insights. This included the earthquake that struck the country's northern parts and Turkey, for which we published a personal account of the unfolding [devastation](#), and presented a [legal argument](#) against the current requirement of seeking the Security Council's clearance to deliver aid in Northern Syria. The lack of accountability inside Syria, and the available avenues to seek justice internationally in the [International Court of Justice](#) and in [American](#) and European courts were also among the topics addressed.



## FELLOWSHIPS

*Hundreds of opposition supporters gather to protest against the rule of President Kais Saied, Tunisia, on March 05, 2023. (Photo by Yassine Gaidi/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)*

TIMEP's fellowships are an investment in the next generation of policy-facing advocates in and from the MENA region. The Nonresident and Bassem Sabry Democracy Fellowship programs provide an opportunity for early and mid-career activists, researchers, journalists, lawyers, and defenders based in the region or with significant ties to it with the platform, resources, and opportunity to develop programming and analysis on the top issues affecting the region, to grow and evolve their skillset, and to reach and inform a decision-making audience around the world. In doing so, the programs position the next generation of changemakers to continue to do their work long-term and cultivate a community of practice that is well-networked, working in coordination and collaboration, and driving the global discourse effectively.

### Nonresident Fellowships

Each May, TIMEP welcomes a cohort of nonresident fellows from and with significant

ties to countries across the MENA region. Each fellow has a mandate that addresses a key issue affecting the region on which they advance the discourse using TIMEP's tools, including analysis, advocacy, events, legal interventions, and social media. In addition to the substantive programming and analysis that fellows produce throughout the year-long program, TIMEP creates opportunities for fellows to collaborate with each other and with alumni of the program, facilitating cross-regional learning and knowledge exchange and building lasting connections among this community of advocates. TIMEP hosts training sessions and workshops for the fellows on key areas that are tailored to the cohorts' individual and collective needs, including digital security, public speaking, and innovative research and investigation techniques. Additionally, TIMEP makes available opportunities to spotlight the fellows and their work through advocacy briefings, speaking opportunities at events and conferences, and participation in media interviews.

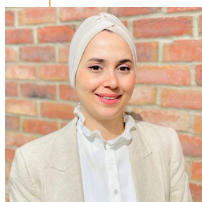
In the first half of 2023, TIMEP continued to invest in and support the work of its outgoing 2022-2023 Nonresident Fellowship cohort. The institute provided space for fellows to publish solutions-oriented analysis, including articles on food security in Tunisia, local governance in Lebanon, and freedom of expression in Algeria. It convened dynamic panel events reaching wide-

ranging audiences featuring fellow expertise including on gender and press freedom issues across the Maghreb and socioeconomic inequality and queer identity in the MENA region. And it empowered fellows to cultivate and build new networks, including for researchers and journalists working on climate change in the MENA region.

## 2023-2024 Nonresident Fellowship Cohort

In May 2023, TIMEP welcomed its largest-ever cohort of Nonresident Fellows for the 2023-2024 fellowship year.

Two of the fellowships announced in the cohort are named after prominent human rights advocates from the region: intersectional queer feminist activist Sarah Hegazi and investigative journalist Mohamed Aboelgheit. The Sarah Hegazi Nonresident Fellowship is awarded to an advocate from the MENA region who is living in exile and will allow them to continue their critical work from abroad while housed at TIMEP. In coordination with the Mohamed Aboelgheit Endowment, the Mohamed Aboelgheit Fellowship is awarded to an early or mid-career journalist in or from the MENA region, immersing them in the world of policymaking and providing a space for them to produce impact-oriented writing.



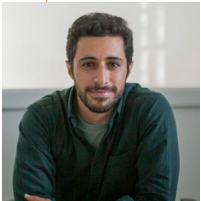
**Alaa Assani** is a Syrian refugee and human rights defender with a background in computer engineering from Aleppo University in Syria. She has worked closely with women-led organizations and civil society in Syria and the wider MENA region.

- **Mandate:** Housing, Land & Property and Gender (Syria)
- As large numbers of Syrians continued to be displaced from their homes as refugees or internally-displaced persons, Assani worked to draw particular attention to housing, land, and property (HLP) rights, focusing on Syrian women in light of the compounded impacts they experience by nature of their positionalities. She produced analysis on what HLP rights are, what the context looks like in Syria, and what needs to be done by policymakers and donors to better protect these rights, particularly for Syrian women and girls. Assani exchanged and coordinated with her cohort member nonresident fellow Reem Abbas, learning from the case study of Sudan and building linkages between Syrian and Sudanese civil society organizations to collaborate on this line of work.



**Ayoub Menzli** is an independent consultant, analyst, and researcher from Tunisia. He holds a master's degree in Economics from the University of Carthage and an MA in European Interdisciplinary Studies from the College of Europe.

- **Mandate:** Political Economy (Tunisia)
- Amid deteriorations in Tunisia's economy and discussions around a potential deal with the IMF, Menzli provided critical insights into how policy solutions to address the political economic crisis should look like. He informed the work of decision-makers at the government and international financial institution level and he produced analysis on what the IMF should do differently, highlighting flaws in its approach and program design and touching on essential, but oft-forgotten areas like public support.



**Lamine Benghazi** is the head of the Justice and Rule of Law program at Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) in Tunisia, an international NGO promoting human rights and access to justice. Before joining ASF, Lamine was responsible for Marsad Majles, the parliament observation program at Al Bawsala, where he remains a board member.

- **Mandate:** Rule of Law and the Judiciary (Tunisia)
- With the crackdown on political organizing and expression intensifying in Tunisia, Benghazi worked to highlight the voices and needs of civil society in a critical moment and drew attention to the instrumentalization of the online space and the escalation in the use of Decree 54 to silence dissent. He documented and highlighted key paradigmatic cases of political detention, engaging with a large community of Tunisian stakeholders to respond to the phenomena.



**Marc Ayoub** is an energy policy researcher currently pursuing his PhD at the University of Galway in Ireland, with a focus on energy and climate policy and community engagement mechanisms for tidal energy projects. He is an Associate Fellow at the AUB Issam Fares Institute of Public Policy and International Affairs in Beirut.

- **Mandate:** Climate and Energy (MENA)
- In the midst of a two-year period during which COP was taking place in the MENA region, Ayoub worked to mainstream in the policy discourse the top climate change and energy-related issues affecting MENA populations. He built collaborations with climate organizations mobilizing in the lead-up to COP 28 and created a space for like-minded voices to coalesce around key issues. Ayoub spoke at an event on climate finance, highlighting the staggering gap between the region's target numbers through 2030 and the funds currently delivered per year for both adaptation and mitigation projects.



**Mohamed Osman** is a Researcher in Human Rights Watch's Africa Division. Previously, Mohamed worked with the Open Society Justice Initiative in New York as an Aryeh Neier Fellow working on corruption and advocacy. Mohamed obtained a law degree and a postgraduate diploma on human rights law from the University of Khartoum. He has a master's degree from the University of Essex on International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law.

- **Mandate:** Governance, Accountability, and Justice (Sudan)
- Following the outbreak of war in Sudan shortly before his fellowship began, Osman committed to highlighting the voices of victims and those most impacted by violence in the Sudan discourse. In a thoughtful piece, he made an unwavering case for the critical importance of justice as part of the solution to end the war, rather than an afterthought. He drew attention to, mobilized support for, and explained the potential role of a new fact-finding mission on Sudan at the UN level. Following the announcement of a new probe at the International Criminal Court (ICC), he laid out a critical argument on what would need to be different in order to ensure a different outcome from the last ICC probe on Darfur.



**Mona Shtaya** is the MENA Campaigns and Partnerships Manager and corporate engagement lead at Digital Action. She is also a nonresident scholar at the Middle East Institute (MEI) in the Cyber Security and Emerging Technology Program and the Palestine-Israel program. She previously worked as the Advocacy and Communications Manager at 7amleh—The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media.

- **Mandate:** Surveillance, Privacy, and Digital Rights (MENA)
- In the wake of October 7 and Israel's war on Gaza, Shtaya worked to hold social media platforms and other corporate actors to account across universal human rights standards, combatting the silencing of Palestinian and pro-Palestine voices online. She produced analysis on how tech giants have harmed users in times of war and spoke to numerous high-profile and independent media outlets alike on issues at the heart of the conflict, from surveillance to content moderation and hate speech.



**Mostafa Al-a'sar** is an Egyptian multidisciplinary journalist, researcher, human rights defender, and former political prisoner who spent three and half years in jail in Egypt for his journalistic work and defense of human rights.

- **Mandate:** Press Freedom and Media (Egypt)
- With Egypt caught in the midst of one of the worst human rights crises in modern times for the country, Al-a'sar's work to support journalists, galvanize and mobilize action for their release, and strengthen institutions key to their protection like the press syndicate was of immense timeliness. He provided rapid response in moments of crisis like the targeting of independent fact-checking platform Matsada2ash, and published analysis on the exploitation of the families of Egypt's detained and disappeared. Based in Beirut himself, he created space for journalists working in Lebanon, from Syria to Egypt, to come together, exchange knowledge and solidarity, and identify opportunities for collaboration.



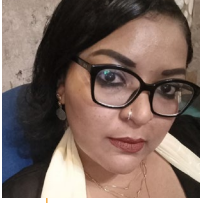
**Nora Noralla** is an Egyptian human rights researcher and consultant focusing mainly on issues of sexual and bodily freedoms as well as Islamic Sharia and human rights in the MENA region. Her engagement with the human rights field started in the wake of the January 25 revolution in Egypt. She is the institute's first Sarah Hegazi Fellow.

- **Mandate:** Gender and Sexuality (MENA)
- From one crisis to another, the plight of the region's LGBTQI+ persons is often forgotten and receives insufficient attention. Throughout her fellowship, Noralla worked to address this gap in the policy discourse, producing analysis on anti-trans narratives and policy in Egypt and surveillance in queer spaces across the MENA region, and participating in a Pride Month event on the socioeconomic inequality experienced by LGBTQI+ persons region-wide.



**Omar Taleb** is a Lebanese human rights lawyer with over eight years of experience in litigation. He does qualitative and quantitative research for a multitude of local and international organizations. Omar currently focuses on strategic litigation and advocacy, and provides protection for marginalized groups, including survivors of domestic violence, migrant domestic workers, and children at risk, and ensures legal guarantees for detainees.

- **Mandate:** Impunity and Access to Justice (Lebanon)
- Responding to an accountability gap in portfolios from the Beirut Port Explosion to cases of financial corruption and mismanagement, Taleb provided legal support to marginalized groups; he worked to amplify the needs and priorities of victim-led organizations and networks; and he published timely analysis on illicit gains.



**Reem Abbas** has worked in the field of communications and advocacy for Sudanese civil society groups and international organizations for more than 10 years. She is active in the women's movement in Sudan. She is also the institute's first Mohamed Aboelgheit Fellow.

- **Mandate:** Land, Conflict, and Resources (Sudan)
- As the war continued in Sudan throughout her fellowship. Abbas engaged with media outlets and civil society organizations to tell the stories of those most impacted by the violence. She raised alarm bells on the spread of the war to West Darfur and she established the RSF's paramilitary industrial complex in widely-read and disseminated analysis pieces. She briefed decision-makers on the asks of local resistance committees and civil society, joining coalitions coming together to demand an end to the war.



**Wafa Mustafa** is an activist, a journalist, and an advocate for Syria's disappeared. Following her father's forced disappearance by the Assad regime, Wafa fled Syria to Turkey in 2013 before completing her studies at Bard College Berlin in Germany. Wafa's advocacy focuses on the impact of detention and enforced disappearance on families, the rights of refugees, and the urgency of international justice and accountability for the crimes of the Assad regime.

- **Mandate:** Victim-Centric Justice (Syria)
- Amid reports of the forced return of refugees, growing momentum toward normalization of the Syrian regime, and a deteriorating economic and security situation inside the country, Mustafa focused her efforts on bringing victim-led and family-led Syrian civil society organizations together to mobilize in support of international accountability at international mechanisms like the International Court of Justice and foreign courts like those in Germany and the United States. She also worked to unite efforts toward the establishment of a UN mechanism to uncover the fate of the missing and disappeared.

## The Bassem Sabry Democracy Fellowship

The Bassem Sabry Democracy Fellowship was established in memory of Egyptian political writer and commentator Bassem Sabry, who was widely-recognized and respected for his nuanced and balanced analysis, his ability to bring people from across the political spectrum together, and his love and vision for the MENA region.

Every year, TIMEP hosts one to two Bassem Sabry Democracy Fellows at its Washington, D.C. offices, providing young analysts from the region with the opportunity to learn the ins and outs of policymaking, to gain exposure to the workings of a nonprofit in the US capital, and to produce policy-relevant programming that is informed by their first-hand knowledge.

Throughout 2023, TIMEP hosted Egyptian journalist and former political prisoner Solafa Magdy as its ninth Bassem Sabry Fellow to focus on the mandate of women political prisoners in Egypt. As a fellow, Magdy conducted in-depth interviews and hosted dynamic focus groups with former political prisoners, provided support in cases of continued detention, and produced



unique analysis in both English and Arabic on the lifecycle of detention for Egypt's women, starting from their forced disappearance and arrest to every stage of the experience, including the impacts on their mental health and economic well-being. Magdy briefed decision-makers in the US government at the executive and legislative branches, spoke at high-profile public events, and was the recipient of honorific awards including at the Integrity Awards Gala hosted by DAWN.



*The Bassem Sabry Democracy Fellowship was established in memory of Egyptian political writer and commentator Bassem Sabry.*



Syrian women stage a protest in demand of the release of detainees prisoned by Assad Regime in Idlib, Syria, On November 12, 2021. (Photo by Izzettin Kasim/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)

## THE LEGAL UNIT

TIMEP's Legal Unit leverages the law as a tool for transformative change in the MENA region to foster transparent, accountable, and just societies. It does so first by working to make the law accessible, understandable, and actionable for lawyers and non-lawyers alike. It commits to ensuring that lawyers and justice advocates have access to the protection, connectivity, resources, and support they need to defend citizens and the societies in which they reside. It works to identify and forge creative pathways for access to justice inside and outside the region at the international, regional, and foreign levels, combating impunity and carving out a vision for accountability in and for the MENA region.

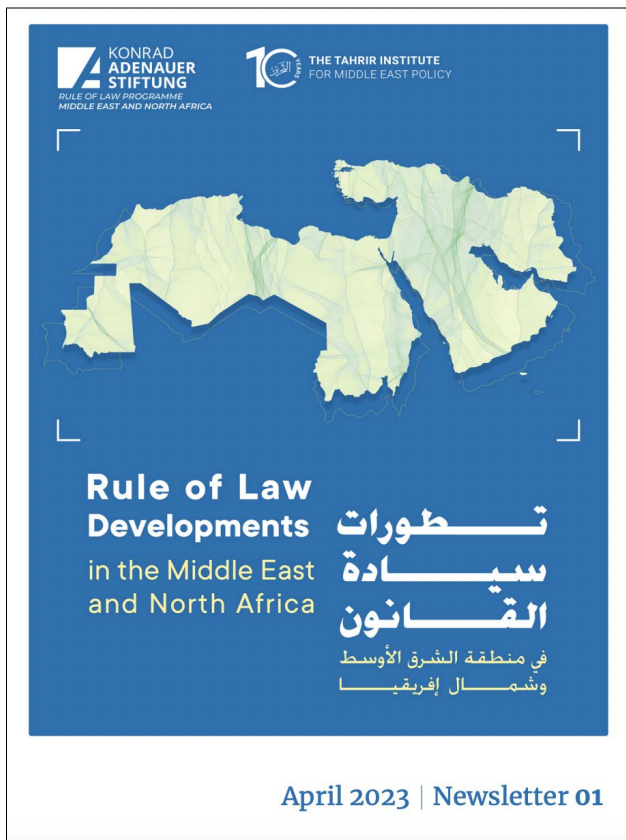
### Unpacking the Law

In 2023, the Legal Unit served as a resource on legal, judicial, and accountability-related issues across the MENA region, publishing policy-facing legal analysis pieces, putting together in-depth

reports, and weighing in on developments as they took place.

In partnership with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's Rule of Law Programme for the Middle East and North Africa, TIMEP's Legal Unit and editorial department launched the newsletter "[Rule of Law Developments in the Middle East and North Africa](#)," made up of four distinct issues. Each issue shed light on some of the most significant rule of law developments in the MENA region through explainers written by experts. Throughout the year, The explainers covered a variety of critical topics, including [the political transition in Sudan](#), [the Beirut Port explosion investigation](#); [restrictions on freedom of expression in Tunisia](#); and [the domestic avenues for accountability in Syria](#).

Also in 2023, TIMEP's nonresident fellows, legal interns, and staff conducted research and published analysis pieces highlighting key law and accountability topics in the MENA region.



These included articles on prison and detention facilities' conditions in Egypt, the ongoing difficulties faced by MENA lawyers and victims' families to access justice, the repercussions of humanitarian crises in MENA countries undergoing armed conflicts, and the impunity of perpetrators. TIMEP also teamed up with partners at Digital Action to produce a white paper

highlighting the key online harms experienced by MENA advocates, the relationship between these online harms and their offline manifestations, and the best practices grounded in international law and policy that companies and states should adopt in response.

In collaboration with the TrialWatch Initiative of the Clooney Foundation for Justice (CFJ), TIMEP completed the research and writing for an extensive analytical report on the pretrial detention system in Egypt, as seen through the eyes of defense lawyers—a lens that is rarely considered on this highly-covered issue. The report features the negative impacts of this systematic machinery on lawyers and their clients, leading to a culture of retaliation and a declining rule of law. The report is scheduled for publication in 2024.

### Investing in, Protecting, and Supporting Lawyers

In a commitment to ensuring that lawyers and the legal community working in and for the MENA region are well-resourced, well-connected, and effective, TIMEP's Legal Unit carried out a number of activities in 2023 to invest in, protect, and support them.

As part of the [Women Journalists in and from North Africa project](#), for example, the Legal Unit



An inside view of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands, on July 23, 2018. (Photo by Abdullah Asiran/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images)



Defendants during the mass trial of over 700 prisoners, Cairo, September 8, 2018. (Photo by MOHAMED EL-SHAHED/AFP via Getty Images)

facilitated constructive dialogue spaces bringing together lawyers and women journalists to explore and leverage the international, regional, and foreign mechanisms available to protect the rights of journalists and pursue accountability when women journalists in and from North Africa experience violations in the course of their work. The project was designed to cut through the silos between those in the legal and journalism communities, to create linkages that would help make the work of lawyers more effective and to open up venues for these lawyers to tap into. Forthcoming in 2024 will be a report documenting the key challenges, risks, and threats experienced by women journalists in North Africa and the legal pathways available to them; a practical toolkit that lays out the key questions for women journalists to consider alongside their lawyers when assessing potential pathways for legal recourse; and the pursuit of a legal submission to the UN system.

In 2023, the Legal Unit collaborated with lawyers and legal advocates in and from the MENA region to expand the pathways available to them and to activate the UN system in a manner that supports their domestic objectives. In collaboration with

lawyers and rights organizations, the Legal Unit contributed to several submissions to the UN Special Procedures, of which the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteur on Truth, Justice and Reparation, and the Special Rapporteur on Counter-terrorism and Human Rights. They unpacked a number of critical topics of importance to the legal community, from the arbitrary detention of political dissidents in Tunisia to the reparations that may be afforded to Syrian survivors and victims of human rights abuses. In addition, the Legal Unit jointly delivered a **submission** to the United Nations Human Rights Committee during its review of Egypt, highlighting the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, liberty and security of persons, and treatment of persons deprived of their liberty.

Also in 2023, TIMEP brought together Egyptian lawyers and legal scholars from inside and outside of the country to participate in an expert working group as part of the "Reimagining Egypt's Criminal Justice System" project to illuminate the various distortions in the country's criminal justice system. TIMEP invited the working group members to participate in a series of discussions

and debates to analyze the criminal justice system's deficiencies in light of the current authority's practices and discuss suggestions for improvement. The project unpacks four key pillars of the criminal justice system in Egypt: the police, the public prosecution, the criminal judiciary, and prisons. The project will culminate with a series of four papers on the four key pillars, featuring an assessment of the problem, a presentation of best practices from comparative and international law, and a series of practical recommendations; publication and dissemination are forthcoming in 2024.

## Activating Access to Justice Pathways

Throughout 2023, the Legal Unit led and supported a number of justice and accountability efforts in the MENA region, placing victims,

survivors, impacted persons, and civil society at the center of these pathways.

For example, it assisted victims and family groups in their advocacy efforts to get votes to support and ultimately activate the newly-established UN Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria. It brought MENA advocates together to brainstorm, strategize, and take actions on the paths toward seeking justice amid impunity and politically-complicated circumstances. In addition, the Legal Unit leveraged targeted human rights and anti-corruption sanctions mechanisms to seek accountability for individual violations, including one submission that sought to address decades of systemic corruption in Lebanon's fuel corruption network.



*A statue made out of leftover glass, rubble, and a broken clock marking the time of the Beirut port blast is placed opposite the site of the explosion, Beirut, on October 20, 2020. (Photo by JOSEPH EID/AFP via Getty Images)*



## ADVOCACY

*The Tunisian National Guard carries out an operation against migrant boats in Sfax, Tunisia, on August 12, 2023. (Photo by Yassine Gaidi/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)*

TIMEP's advocacy work is central to the institute's mission to center advocates in and from the region in policymaking affecting the region. Following a decade of work and building on the institute's strong reputation for reliable policy analysis, TIMEP's advocacy team has been sought out by policymakers, and has established strong connections with Global North governments, multilateral institutions, and international financial institutions as part of its multi pronged effort to inform and influence stakeholders to constructively engage in the region, with a particular focus on TIMEP's five priority countries: Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria, and Tunisia.

In 2023, TIMEP fellows and staff engaged with policymakers from over a dozen countries and dozens of congressional offices. TIMEP's advocacy team briefed governments and international institutions to shape their strategic engagements with the region, covering a range of

topics such as the political economies of Egypt and Tunisia, the outbreak of war in Sudan, the forced return of Syrian refugees from Lebanon, and accountability for the disappeared in Syria.

The team's advocacy contributed to TIMEP's core mission of centering local perspectives through elevating the voices of fellows and partners from and in the region. Throughout 2023, TIMEP hosted and co-hosted multiple advocacy delegations on topics like accountability in Lebanon and pushing for a ceasefire in Gaza, placing the region's advocates and human rights defenders in the spaces where they were most likely to drive policy. The team also hosted a number of private roundtables with stakeholder governments and civil society partners, creating a space for the exchange of ideas and discussion with TIMEP's local partners, centering local perspectives on difficult topics such as responding to the February 2023 earthquakes in Syria and Turkey, political repression in Tunisia, digital rights in the

region, and reforming the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) engagement with the region.

Throughout the year, major news outlets regularly turned to TIMEP fellows and staff for analysis and context to enrich their coverage and inform their readers. Some examples where TIMEP expertise was featured include The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Los Angeles Times, The BBC, The Guardian, The Sunday Times, France Info, DW, CNN, Le Monde, France 24, Der Spiegel, El Pais, The Independent, Foreign Policy, Sudan Tribune, Agence France Presse, Le Figaro, Politico, The Associated Press, NPR, and Reuters.

## The IMF in Tunisia

Building on its 2022 successes in informing the IMF's programming in Egypt at the IMF and shareholder level, TIMEP worked in 2023 to inform the potential deal between the IMF and the Tunisian government. TIMEP's advocacy team, in partnership with Tunisian civil society organizations, produced a white paper: "Tunisia's Economic Trajectory: Recommendations for Inclusive Structural Reform," which laid out clear

policy recommendations urging stakeholders to pursue inclusive and progressive economic reforms, focusing on how future financial assistance from the international community can be better shaped to be both economically and politically sustainable.

Following the research and writing of the white paper, TIMEP's advocacy team spent 2023 advocating for these inclusive economic reforms with both the IMF and its key shareholders. In April, the advocacy team put forth these recommendations during the Spring Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank in Washington D.C., holding meetings with the Fund's Tunisia teams and stakeholders in the US administration. Following this work, in June, TIMEP was in Tunis to meet with a number of international stakeholders, including IMF representatives, Tunisian civil society organizations, and foreign missions to put forth recommendations and to create and strengthen the recommendations through coalition building with local civil society actors.

In September, TIMEP shared its recommendations on Tunisia's economy during a convening in Rome, Italy with North Africa



*Photo by Fadel Dawod/Getty Images.*



*Alia Ibrahim, Monika Borgmann, Zena Wakim, and Sami Halabi speak with Rhana Natour Fares in a panel on accountability in Lebanon hosted by TIMEP at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. (Photo by Mostafa Bassim)*

Directors from the German, Swedish, Italian, French, Spanish, and Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs, as well as the European External Action Service (EEAS). In October, TIMEP traveled to Marrakech, Morocco, for the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank. In Marrakech, the advocacy team continued to put forth its recommendations on Tunisia, meeting with civil society partners and IMF shareholders as well as sharing copies of the white paper with senior Tunisian officials.

## Rule of Law and Accountability in Lebanon

In September and October 2023, TIMEP hosted a delegation of Lebanese advocates in Washington, D.C., and Ottawa, Canada to press the US and Canadian governments to be global leaders in rule of law and accountability issues in Lebanon. The delegation consisted of financial corruption expert and advisor to the Depositors Union of Lebanon Sami Halabi, investigative journalist Alia Ibrahim, activist, filmmaker, and widow of assassinated Lebanese intellectual Lokman Slim, Monika Borgmann Slim, and international lawyer Zena Wakim.

Throughout meetings in the US with congressional offices and administration policymakers, including at the State Department

and the White House, and in Canada with policymakers at the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Privy Council Office of the Prime Minister, the group urged the US and Canadian government to support an independent UN-fact finding investigation into the Beirut Port explosion and the political assassinations that followed, policies to deter and counter political and financial corruption networks which have perpetuated the country's financial crisis and obstructed accountability efforts, and a strategic re-thinking of the US and Canadian relationships with the Lebanese Armed Forces. In Washington, D.C., TIMEP also hosted the group for a public event and a strategy session with civil society partners to pursue coalition work on rule of law and accountability in Lebanon.

## Centering Palestinians in the Global Call for Ceasefire

In November, TIMEP partnered with the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED), Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), and Telos to co-host a delegation of Palestinian Christian advocates: Dr. Munther Isaac, who is a pastor at the the Evangelical Christian Church in Bethlehem and the Lutheran Church in Beit Sahour, Dr. Jack Sara, Palestinian Christian pastor and the president of Bethlehem Bible College, and Palestinian Christian advocate Tamar Haddad.

During a week of meetings with congressional offices, the State Department, and the White House, the delegation delivered a unified message from Palestinian Christians about the cancellation of Christmas celebrations the following December due to the ongoing Israeli atrocities being committed on Palestinians. They also raised the risk of the extinction of Gaza's historic Christian population, as a result of Israel's war on Gaza, with US support. In line with this message, the group pressed the US government to support an immediate and durable ceasefire and to use its political leverage over Israel to press for increased humanitarian access into Gaza and accountability for the grave violations being committed against Palestinians throughout the war.

## Political Prisoners in Egypt

In 2023, TIMEP's advocacy team continued its work to press for the release of political prisoners in Egypt. TIMEP briefed dozens of offices in the United States, Canada, and Europe, on Egypt's political prisoner crisis, putting forth recommendations for policymakers to effectively engage various points of leverage with the Egyptian government to press for the release of those unjustly detained. In 2023, TIMEP continued to center minorities and the vulnerable communities in its Egypt advocacy, including women and Coptic Christians who are unjustly imprisoned in Egypt.

Throughout 2023, TIMEP was privileged to host Bassem Sabry Democracy Fellow Solafa Magdy. While hosting Magdy, TIMEP partnered with her



*Bassem Sabry Fellow Solafa Magdy with  
Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib*

to advocate for women political prisoners in Egypt in meetings with the State Department and Congress, particularly focusing on mobilizing the bipartisan, bicameral Congressional Women's Caucus. During meetings centering Magdy's story and experiences, she raised awareness of the women behind bars in Egypt and the gendered violations they face in Egypt's prisons, and pressed the US government to use its tools of leverage to press for the release of Egypt's women political prisoners and an improvement in conditions for women in Egypt's prisons.



People check a damaged house in southern Khartoum, Sudan on June 12, 2023. (Photo by AFP via Getty Images)

## EVENTS AND CONVERSATIONS

As an organization dedicated to fostering a space for dynamic policy discourse, TIMEP regularly hosts virtual and in-person public and private events and convenings intended to bring stakeholders together for solutions-oriented conversations, knowledge exchange, and networking.

### Cultivating Community

In 2023, TIMEP celebrated 10 years since its founding in Washington, D.C., and in doing so, celebrated the advocates in the region and around the world for whom it has served as a hub for learning, exchange, and community for over a decade. At its 10 year anniversary gala in Washington, D.C., the institute hosted Lebanese human rights lawyer and founder of Accountability Now Zena Wakim for a keynote speech on the pursuit of accountability and justice across the MENA region and the powerful role

that organizations like TIMEP can play in making this vision a reality. It announced and dedicated two new named fellowships in honor of brilliant and impactful advocates from the MENA region no longer with us, intersectional queer feminist activist Sarah Hegazi and award-winning investigative journalist Mohamed Aboelgheit. And it celebrated artistic talent from the region as Palestinian-American singer and songwriter Mona Miari captivated audience members with an Arabic and jazz fusion performance and Syrian soprano singer Lubana Al-Quntar led a nostalgic journey through classical Arabic music.

Also in 2023, TIMEP began hosting quarterly MENA Social Nights, informal gatherings in Washington, D.C., that are free of charge, open to all, and dedicated to creating spaces where the diverse members of TIMEP's audience can come together to be in community amid



*Photo taken in a courtroom during a trial, Alexandria, Egypt, on December 7, 2013.  
(Photo by Ibrahim Ramadan/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images)*

moments of celebration and sadness alike, to exchange and learn from each other, and to network professionally and personally in the nation's capital.

## Climate Change and COP

With COP 27 taking place in Egypt and COP 28 taking place in the United Arab Emirates, TIMEP brought researchers, journalists, and scholars working on climate change together to discuss ways in which to optimize the global attention on the MENA region and to offer adaptation and mitigation interventions that could respond to the pressing needs in the region.

In early February, and in collaboration with the Middle East Institute (MEI), TIMEP hosted speakers from Egypt to Syria and Lebanon to discuss the newly-established loss and damage fund and the follow-up needed for implementation in the months to come. To book-end the year at the end of November, TIMEP teamed up with the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) to continue the conversation on climate finance in a panel which featured the participation of nonresident fellow Marc Ayoub and was moderated by former nonresident fellow Kareem Chehayeb.

## Accountability and the Rule of Law

Accountability and the rule of law figured prominently in the institute's event programming in 2023 as well. On the heels of an advocacy delegation of Lebanese advocates coming into Washington, D.C. for a week of meetings to mobilize US leadership on Lebanon accountability issues, TIMEP hosted Zena Wakim, Alia Ibrahim; Monika Borgman, and Sami Halabi, for a standing room-only panel event and reception at the National Press Club on how Lebanon's international partners can support the path to justice. Earlier in the year and following the anniversary of the Beirut Port Explosion, TIMEP hosted a virtual event to help participants understand the networks and systems protecting Lebanon's elite. Nonresident fellow Omar Taleb joined panelists Wakim, Lama Karamé of the Legal Agenda, and Assaad Thebian of the Gherbal Initiative to discuss the tools that had yet to be leveraged to hold the Lebanese political elite accountable, why many international actors have yet to take decisive action against them, and the imperative necessity for immediate judicial reform.

Outside of Lebanon, TIMEP hosted events about Syria, Tunisia, and the MENA region as a whole that further tackled rule of law issues. Following the filing of a lawsuit in the United States on behalf of Obada Mzaik, a Syrian-American man who was arbitrarily detained and tortured by Syrian state actors in 2012, TIMEP collaborated with the Free Syria's Disappeared Coalition and the MENA Prison Forum to host an event to make accessible the legal details of the case for a non-technical audience, bringing together the plaintiff, the lawyers on the case, and nonresident fellow Wafa Mustafa. Separately, Mustafa participated in the Brussels Conference in a session on furthering justice and accountability for the Syrian people, including the state of play of ongoing efforts by civil society, international organizations, and national jurisdictions.

On the two year anniversary of Tunisian President Kais Saied's political power grab, Avocats Sans Frontières, EuroMed Rights, The Tunisian National Committee for the Defense of Freedoms and Democracy, and TIMEP came together to draw particular attention to political detention in the country and the significant deterioration on this portfolio. Finally, and as the world marked the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, TIMEP supported nonresident fellow Wafa Mustafa to design and host an event bringing together family members of disappeared persons from Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt to share their personal stories, talk about the advocacy they are conducting, and explain the forms of support that they need in order to be able to continue this work.

## Re-Envisioning Economic Justice

Committed to rethinking the ways in which economies of the MENA region can better serve their populations, another key area of events programming revolved around understanding the economy. For Egypt, this included a co-hosted virtual panel with the Carnegie Middle East Center featuring insights from Deputy Director Timothy Kaldas, as well as an in-person discussion in Washington, D.C. nearly one year after the IMF had struck a deal with the Egyptian

government to award a loan of \$3 billion over 46 months, featuring Kaldas and renowned scholars Yezid Sayigh and Shana Marshall.

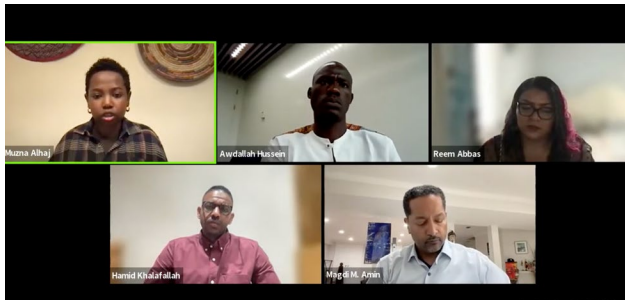


Moving to Lebanon, TIMEP hosted nonresident fellow Hussein Cheaito, Dr. Nada Mora of the Lebanese University, Nabil Abdo of Oxfam, and Sarah Saadoun of Human Rights Watch for a virtual discussion on how Lebanon's economy can be reinvigorated and reimagined to be meaningfully productive. And in a commitment to ensuring that marginalized groups are not left out of conversations on the economy, TIMEP commemorated Pride Month by hosting an event dedicated to addressing the unique socioeconomic challenges experienced by LGBTQI+ persons across the MENA region, in doing so addressing the question of what meaningful inclusion of queer persons looks like socially, economically, and holistically.



## Centering Sudanese and Palestinian Voices

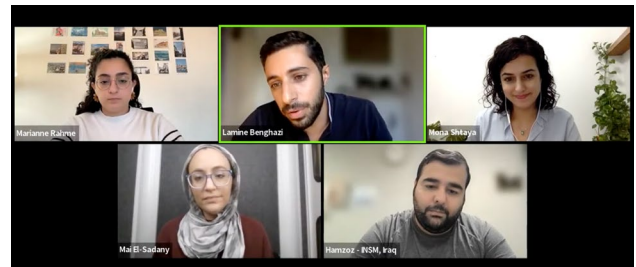
Following the outbreak of the war in Sudan and amid insufficient attention in the policy discourse, TIMEP was committed to remedying this vacuum in the conversation and to offering a solutions-oriented conversation. The institute hosted a discussion on Sudan's ongoing



conflict, the role of the international community, and how global actors can change the course of action on the ground and help the Sudanese people realize their aspirations for a peaceful and democratic country, featuring nonresident fellow Reem Abbas, former nonresident fellow Hamid Khalafallah, Darfuri civil society activist Awadallah Hussein, and Muzna Alhaj of the Khartoum Resistance Committees, moderated by TIMEP Board of Advisors member Magdi Amin. In the months that followed, nonresident fellows Mohamed Osman and Reem Abbas would participate in similarly critical

conversations hosted by partners, including a hearing in the United Kingdom on Sudan and feminist activism in and for Sudan.

Particularly but not solely following the onset of Israel's war on Gaza, TIMEP worked to ensure that Palestinian voices would be prominent in the conversation on social media, surveillance, and technology. This included a TIMEP-hosted panel discussion on digital rights across the MENA region, featuring nonresident fellow Mona Shtaya, as well as Shtaya's participation in other external events including on the #NoTechForApartheid campaign.



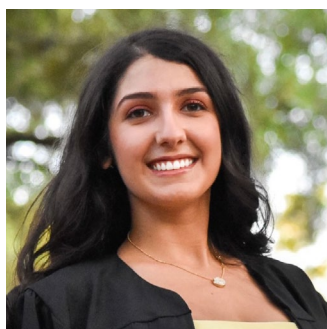
# SPOTLIGHT: INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In 2023, TIMEP is proud to have meaningfully expanded the institute's Internship Program.

Over the course of the year, TIMEP was pleased to welcome and host 16 interns. In addition to continuing the core internships at TIMEP—Legal, Digital Engagement, Advocacy, Editorial, and Programs & Events—TIMEP was able to diversify the program to include additional internships on an as-needed basis to expand the institute's Arabic-engagement initiative and to bolster its political economy work.

Additionally, TIMEP implemented processes that enhanced the quality of the delivery of the program, including mid-internship assessments by interns, providing supervisors with feedback on educational content, delivery satisfaction, and quality of management. TIMEP is delighted to have received across the board positive feedback from outgoing interns, and is committed to continuing to grow TIMEP's internship program and to offer this opportunity to up and coming policy professionals.

Here is what one of TIMEP's stellar 2023 interns had to say about their internship experience:



**Naz Hussein**  
2024 Thomas R. Pickering  
Foreign Affairs Fellow  
Former TIMEP Advocacy  
Intern

*Before joining TIMEP as an advocacy intern, I had followed the organization's incredible work for years. I was so inspired by the authentic voices it highlighted from the MENA region, a mission that is often neglected in the policy space.*

*After working with the TIMEP team, I found my sense of hope reinvigorated. Not only was I influenced by everyone's passions, but I also discovered new ways of fighting for human rights and anti-corruption in the MENA from a policy perspective. For example, I'll never forget advocating for female political prisoner rights with Egyptian journalist Solafa Magdy.*

*Overall, my internship with TIMEP connected me to a network of individuals I highly revere and pushed me to pursue a career within public service."*



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