



## **“We Are Connected, But Are We Communicating?”**

### ***American Foreign Policy and Jordanian Society: A Dialogue***

**Amman, Jordan  
May 29 - 31, 2008**

In late May 2008 twenty-two Americans, sixteen Jordanians, and two Iraqis gathered for three days to discuss the impact of American foreign policy in Jordanian society and to create a set of concrete recommendations for policymakers. The conference, entitled **“We Are Connected, But Are We Communicating? American Foreign Policy and Jordanian Society: A Dialogue,”** was organized by Americans for Informed Democracy (AID) and the Project On Middle East Democracy (POMED), in cooperation with Leaders of Tomorrow (LoT) and the University of Jordan Center for Strategic Studies (CSS). It was sponsored by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI).

Participants were students and young professionals, aged 18-28, from a variety of backgrounds and professions including social and political scientists, doctors, engineers, language professionals, and students.

Over the course of three days, four panels, and two workshops, the participants listened to and engaged with a diverse selection of speakers who were experts in their respective fields. Panels featured Osama Alshurafa, Director of Qasid Institute for Classical and Modern Standard Arabic; Zainab Al-Suwaij, Executive Director, American Islamic Congress; Professor Marc Lynch from the Elliot School for International Affairs at George Washington University; Esra’a Al-Shafei, Director of Mideast Youth; Kathryn Stevens, of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); and others.

Participants then worked in small groups to develop and ratify policy recommendations based on the ideas discussed in the panels. Forty recommendations were initially developed, then amended down to 19 for the purposes of voting.

In the end, the participants elected two representatives and two alternates to represent the group in a one-week Washington, D.C. seminar where they will present policymakers with the conference recommendations. They will all continue the dialogue through a series of post-conference advocacy activities.



## **PARTICIPANTS**

Of the 40 official conference participants, 22 were Americans, 16 were Jordanians, and two were Iraqis resident in Jordan. All were between the ages of 21 and 28. Participants were accepted through applications based on interest and participation in civil society activism and an essay discussing American-Jordanian communication.

American participants included students ranging from undergraduates to Ph.D candidates, recent graduates, Fulbright scholars from the region, and young professionals working in relevant fields. Prior knowledge of the Middle East and Jordan ranged widely within the American group. Several were first-time travelers to the region, coming specifically for the conference. Others had already developed deep interests in Jordan and the Middle East, and thus attended the conference for additional knowledge and experience. Some were currently resident in Jordan, attending language institutes, teaching English, researching, or working. In order to facilitate American participation from outside Jordan, the conference committee granted partial travel scholarships to 5 American participants coming from Egypt, Israel, Kuwait, and the U.S. The American participants included 11 women and 11 men.

Jordanian and Iraqi participants came from cities around the country, including Amman, Madaba, Balqa, Irbid, Zarqa, and Aqaba. They were students and professionals in a variety of fields such as political science, engineering, and biology. Students came from the University of Jordan, Yarmouk University, and the Jordan University of Science and Technology. Many were leading and active members in youth societies such as Leaders of Tomorrow, the All Jordan youth commission, United Nations University, the Jordan youth forum, International Association of Students in Economics and Business Management, and more. The Jordanian and Iraqi participants included nine women and nine men.

## **OPENING REMARK**

The conference opened with introductory words from conference organizing committee member Mohammad Azraq, Leaders of Tomorrow President and conference organizing committee member Sami Hourani, and POMED Executive Director Andrew Albertson.

Azraq, a participant in last year's conference, emphasized the importance of the conference recommendations and the two participants who would travel as elected delegates representing the conference recommendations in Washington, D.C. Albertson discussed POMED's interest in youth dialogue as a foundation for positive political reform. "Sometimes the best, most innovative ideas come not from the old guard but from young leaders," he said in his remarks. Hourani engaged with the idea of democracy development, individualized for his country's context. "Democracy is not a 'Windows' system where you can 'upload' it to your country and operate any group of citizens," he analogized.

Dr. Mohammad al-Halaihqa, the conference keynote speaker, drew on his experience as a career politician to share his thoughts on why youth dialogue is crucial for strong future relations between Jordan and America. He argued that for political and economic reform in Jordan to succeed, there must first be regional stability, and that this requires a strong understanding of the region by the next generation of leaders around the world. "Young people like you can help bridge the gap between our two peoples," he told the participants.

<b>PANEL ONE: Youth, Cultural, and Student Exchange Programs</b>
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The conference opened with a discussion of the exchange programs which are often important vehicles of inter-cultural communication as well as important elements of U.S. diplomacy abroad. Panelists included:

- Alain McNamara, Executive Director of the Jordanian-American Commission for Cultural Exchange
- Osama Alshurafa, Director of Qasid Institute for Classical and Modern Standard Arabic
- Lina Arafat, Coordinator of MEPI Alumni
- David Mees, Cultural Attaché, U.S. Embassy, Amman

**Alain McNamara**, Director of the Jordanian-American Commission for Cultural Exchange, more commonly known as the Fulbright Commission, gave the long view of American-Jordanian educational exchanges. Having directed the Fulbright Commission for more than 20 years, Mr. McNamara could speak of the enduring successes that result from intercultural student exchanges. He emphasized that the problems of intercultural hatred and misunderstanding are not new ones, as these were the very reasons that the Fulbright Commission was founded in 1946. Though bonds formed between students during these exchanges are often challenged by their political context, he argued that they have proven to be strong and worth the investment.

**Osama Alshurafa**, Director of the Qasid Institute, spoke about his experience with facilitating cultural exchange here in Jordan. As the director of an organization which attracts, educates, and attempts to integrate many Americans and other foreigners into Jordan, Mr. Alshurafa discussed how he has seen that people are willing both to be connected and to communicate. He cited examples of Qasid students working for NGOs in Amman or having Jordanian friends who feel that they can confide in them. “It is the issue of connectedness that determines whether we learn to live with mutual cooperation or limit the growth of our societies,” he said.

**Lina Arafat** is the coordinator of the Middle East Progress Initiative Alumni Network, which helps Jordanian students who participate in MEPI programmes to remain active and connected. She spoke about the sometimes drastic changes that some Jordanian students undergo when they travel to America on exchange programmes. This American-funded network helps students to use their cultural experiences and leverage them into successful opportunities upon their return to Jordan.



**David Mees**, the cultural attaché of the American embassy in Amman, explained that the United States government considers dialogues such as those held in this conference to be extremely valuable. U.S. spending in this area has gone up in recent years, with an emphasis on youth. Education and cultural exchanges are two-way streets, he explained, and there is misunderstanding on both sides. He elaborated that the issue of international relations is not monolithic from the point of view of the U.S. government, but rather one that requires a delicate and nuanced understanding. “We’re not naïve in the U.S. government,” he said, “we know how unpopular U.S. foreign policy is in this region, yet we are made aware almost daily how popular American culture is and how highly people regard their education exchanges in each other’s country.”

**PANEL TWO: U.S. Foreign Policy in Iraq: Effects on Jordanian Society**

The conference opened with a discussion of the exchange programs which are often important vehicles of inter-cultural communication as well as important elements of U.S. diplomacy abroad. Panelists included:

- David Green, Political Counselor, American Embassy in Amman

- Zainab al-Zuwajj, Executive Director, American Islamic Congress
- Hala Sarraf, Founder, Iraqi Health Aid
- Dr. Mahjoob Zweiri, University of Jordan Center for Strategic Studies

**David Green**, Political Counselor of the U.S. Embassy in Amman, spoke about the U.S. acknowledgement and aid efforts for the severe humanitarian crisis created by Iraqis fleeing to Jordan. He noted that while the Iraqi presence in Jordan is not harming the Jordanian economy, assisting Iraqi refugees is important to the U.S. government. This is in recognition both of what Iraqis need and deserve and the longstanding good relations between the U.S. and Jordan. Ultimately the U.S. government would like to provide those Iraqis who do not wish to return with assistance in finding suitable resettlement options. “The countries hosting displaced Iraqis, like Jordan, have willingly assumed a huge humanitarian burden for which they certainly have the appreciation and support of U.S. and the international community,” Green noted.

**Zainab al-Zuwajj**, Executive Director of the American Islamic Congress, spoke about the legal, economic, and social difficulties faced by Iraqis living in Jordan. She said that finances are being exhausted, people are not able to work to earn more money, and they are sometimes unable to obtain the proper visa to remain safely in the country. Al-Zuwajj also discussed the duty of the international community to help Iraqi refugees, specifically noting some health, food, and education programs being implemented in Jordan. Her organization had recently held a conference on some of these issues in Jordan, including some Iraqis who were resident in the country, since Iraqis could not obtain visas to come from Iraq.

**Hala Sarraf**, founder of the Iraqi NGO Iraqi Health Aid, spoke from the point of view of a member of the Iraqi community in Jordan as well as a health policy researcher. When Sarraf returned to Jordan in 2007 after finishing a Fulbright scholarship in the United States, she found Iraqis both inside and outside of the country in dire straits. She has since dedicated all of her time to helping and restoring the Iraqi community, both inside and outside of Jordan. Sarraf explained that because many Iraqis do not have official refugee status in Jordan, they are not able to work in the country, leaving them without any source of income. Sarraf argued that those Iraqis who do wish to stay in Jordan need to cooperate with Jordanians to make sure that the Iraqi community becomes properly integrated into the national society.

**Dr. Mahjoob Zweiri** of the University of Jordan Center for Strategic Studies spoke about the political, social, and economic effects of the Iraq war on Jordanian society. He noted that there are political effects in terms of both the loss of security and the pressure on the Jordanian government as both a victim and a cause of the war. Socially, the presence of many Iraqis in Jordan has disrupted society and put a strain on social services in the country. Economically, the rise in oil prices following the loss of subsidized Iraqi oil is a major burden on the Jordanian economy. In addition, Jordan has lost Iraq as one of its major markets, bringing difficulties to many businesses in the country. He concluded with cautionary advice to the future leaders in the audience. “The effects of U.S. foreign policy in Iraq since 2003 are not going to end with a limited or complete withdrawal from Iraq. This is important for the youth generation like you to understand. These effects are going to remain in Iraq, and therefore this policy and its effects are going to extend for long years. Iraqis to Jordanians, Jordanians to Iraqis, Saudis and others – this is an issue that has to stay in discussion and research that will last for decades.”

<b>PANEL THREE: Youth Cyber-Activism: Tool of American-Jordanian Communication</b>
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Participants praised the third panel as one of the highlights of the conference. The panel included a diverse range of voices on blogging and citizen journalism, including:

- Marc Lynch, author of *Voices of the New Arab Public* and the blog site Abu Aardvark
- Ahmad Humeid, founder of Ikbis.com, and manager of SYNTAX

- Nicholas Seeley, Editor-in-Chief, *JO Magazine*, Jordan
- Esra'a Al-Shafei, Executive Director of Mideast Youth

**Marc Lynch**, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the Elliot School for International Affairs, presented a general view on blogging and cyber-activism in the Arab world, citing the problems and challenges facing such activism and bringing up examples of government oppression against bloggers in Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

Lynch delineated five different types of blogging. In “bridge blogging” bloggers are primarily interested in building bridges across cultures with their writing. These are often in English, intended for a foreign audience, and represent a narrow, elite segment of society. “Activism blogging” is an integral and organic part of political agenda and action. Lynch cited Egypt and Bahrain as examples, noting that this blogging consists of activists within a movement writing for each other. “Public sphere blogging” tries to generate debates about social and political issues within the world of the blogger. These blogs may be in Arabic or English, he said, and the micro-communities surrounding these blogs may self-segregate into like-minded discussion groups. “Community building” blogging is defined as a combination of public sphere and activism, such as Muslim Brotherhood bloggers in Egypt. Writing in this case is intended for a larger audience. The fifth and last type he brought up was “citizen journalism” which he viewed as an alternative to the press, injecting some valuable investigative journalism into the public sphere.

**Ahmed Humeid**, founder of ikbis.com, and manager of SYNTAX Digital, presented his view on the Jordanian blogosphere’s successes and challenges. “Ikbis.com has been described by *Newsweek* as the Youtube of the Arab world, though we are really trying to move it away from that positioning now. We discovered that we can’t wait for the user-generated content revolution to happen on our website. We have to push the debate, as a site.” Mr. Humeid brought up HM Queen Rania’s Youtube channel as an example of reaching out and instigating debate.

Mr. Humeid also discussed what he perceived as a lack of communication between the West and the Arab world and how challenging it is to have a fruitful productive dialogue between both worlds. “I think that the answer to the question of this conference ‘We Are Connected, But Are We Communicating?’ is that definitely we are not communicating. We just touched the surface of what is possible in this area.” He concluded by addressing some of the misconceptions, hatred and aggression directed towards the West from the Arab world and vice-versa. “Sometimes what is coming to the surface in the Arab blogosphere is really hurtful and very violent. For example, you don’t read in the Arab blogosphere about blowing up Mecca, but you get to read that in the American blogosphere, and vice-versa – you get some blood-thirsty comments in our blogs or discussion forums. But it is bringing the reality to the surface without any editorial interventions, and it is important for intercultural debates to get these things to the surface.”

**Nicholas Seeley**, Editor-in-Chief of *JO Magazine*, a Jordanian magazine published in English, began his presentation by talking about the differences between professional journalism and blogging as a form of citizen journalism, which he saw as “pay, professionalism, and passion.” Seeley also raised concerns about how the internet and electronic media could empower the wrong people, such as terrorists and neo-Nazi organizations. He finished by addressing the outreach challenge facing electronic media and citizen journalism in the region. “If cyber-journalism is going to be anything more than a toy, [we must] enable anyone to use it... In short, if you want a revolution, it’s going to start in the classroom, not in chat rooms.”

**Esra'a Al-Shafei**, the 21-year-old Bahraini Director of the Middle East Youth Network (Mideast Youth), started out by talking about the initiation of her network. “I wanted to discuss things not only with fellow Bahrainis, not only with fellow Saudis, but with people that mainstream media does not allow us to communicate with. People like Iranians, people like Israelis, Kurds, people who have no opportunity to connect with each other, and not only due to the lack of connecting points, but also because people don't allow us to connect with each other.”

She then presented the different campaigns of Mideast Youth, such as Baha'i Rights, Kurdish Rights, and the Free Kareem Campaign dedicated to the Egyptian blogger Kareem Amr, who was imprisoned for publicly expressing controversial opinions on his blog.

Mideast Youth has also gone beyond the Middle East in cooperation projects with high schools in the United States. In the past two years, Mideast Youth has held three inter-cultural dialogue videoconferences involving American and Middle Eastern high school students.

#### PANEL FOUR: U.S Foreign Aid for Political Reform

The fourth panel, on U.S. Foreign Aid for Political Reform, featured as panelists:

- Nadia Bushnaq, Director of Family Guidance and Awareness Centre
- Kathryn Stevens, Programme Director, USAID-Jordan
- Sa'ed Karajeh, Senior Partner, Legal Counsel, and Attorney at Law

**Nadia Bushnaq**, Director of Family Guidance and Awareness Centre (FGAC), discussed her experience as a Middle East Partnership Initiative beneficiary. "MEPI supported us to achieve our goals for the progress and the empowerment of women and society, and MEPI is always keen on encouraging and supporting initiatives to empower women, civil society and NGOs, and promoting democracy and political reform."

Bushnaq tackled the various programmes FGAC works on in Zarqa governorate, such as an election awareness campaign, democracy and civic education workshops, and an HIV/AIDS awareness campaign.

**Kathryn Stevens**, Programme Director, USAID-Jordan, explained that the five main issues on which USAID focuses in Jordan are health, water, education, economic growth and cash transfers. In addition, they recently brought in a team to examine energy sector needs for a future program. Stevens noted that the keys to USAID success in Jordan are syncing USAID programs with home-grown priorities and having a good balance between "people-level" impact and infrastructure programs. She then laid out percentages and figures about the certain areas on which USAID spends money in Jordan, and the various training programs it provides to various Jordanian entities. She concluded by addressing the issue of familiarity of the Jordanian society with USAID and its programmes. A little over half of people were able to cite the USAID slogan, "From the American People," implying that they distinguish the aid programs from other parts of government-driven U.S. foreign policy.

**Sa'ed Karajeh**, Legal Advisor, talked about Jordanian society's perception of USAID in Jordan. He started off by comparing the definition of civil society in Jordan and the Arab world with the U.S and Europe. "Civil society in the Arab world and in Jordan is totally different than Europe and America. In the Arabic world 'civil society' is '*mojtama'a madani*' where '*mojtama'a*' refers to the place you live in and '*madani*' is the place of the city. People from '*madani*' are people from the city. In this kind of linguistic background you can only see that there is no political understanding of this concept. On the contrary, in Europe "civil society" in Europe and in other



languages it does not come from civilization, it comes from a very political understanding about individuals creating their life and decision-making in the so-called democracy.”

Karajeh then addressed the concerns in Jordanian civil society with the perceived connection between U.S. foreign aid and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some recipient-state citizens may feel that they are being implicated or biased when they take U.S. foreign assistance. He concluded by affirming the importance of communication and dialogue on the people-to-people level as a way to improve the use of U.S. foreign aid funds in Jordan. “We need communication between the policymakers and the people, and maybe the American people who are sending this money to the Middle East would know more about our people, our causes, our culture – then money can be directed to the right people and through the right channels and through the right policy.”

## **WORKING GROUPS**

The meat of the conference and the participants’ favorite part was the hour-long discussion groups after each panel. It is here that participants got the opportunity to critically evaluate what they had just heard in the panels, thinking among a challenging and diverse set of peers. It is also here that friendships were begun and the foundations of the long-term conference network are developed.

In the registration packet, each student received his or her group assignment. After each panel, participants broke into their small groups of five to eight people. While they were given a set of starter questions, many simply followed their own ideas throughout the discussions. From the outcome of their dialogue, each group of participants collectively developed several policy recommendations on the topic. Recommendations were, for the most part, directed towards the American government, the Jordanian government, or both. On their own initiative, some participants also included civil society actors in their recommendations.

Each group elected two reporters – one Jordanian and one American – to record the recommendations and then compile them for voting on the last day.

### ***Amendment Process***

On the last day, participants again returned to their working groups with the complete compilation of 40 recommendations from all of the groups. Each group was assigned the recommendations for one panel, with the task of removing redundancies and reducing the number of recommendations by combining similar ideas in order to facilitate the voting process. By streamlining the amendment process, participants were able to have a large, diverse number of recommendations and adequate time to debate during the voting process.



## **POLICY RECOMMENDATION VOTING**

After completing the difficult task of reformatting recommendations, participants gathered with print-outs of all 19 draft recommendations for voting.

Each recommendation was read aloud once. Participants then had the opportunity give either the “pro” or the “con” argument for each

resolution, followed by a brief open discussion. Here, discussion was focused on legislative and policy-building processes in either country. Participants concentrated on creating a set of recommendations that could present feasible, straightforward suggestions that busy legislators would have time to digest.

After discussion, each participant privately filled out his or her paper ballot with a “yes” vote or a “no” vote for that number. When the votes were counted, each recommendation had to pass by both a majority of American representatives and a major of Jordanian representatives.

## CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

In addition to four panels and four discussion sessions, participants also attended two workshops given by Vicente Garcia of Americans for Informed Democracy and Lina Ejeilat of *JO Magazine*.

**Vicente Garcia**, Peace and Security Program Director at Americans for Informed Democracy, held a workshop entitled “Organizing an International Discussion.” Garcia created an interactive environment to discuss how to have a discussion about international issues. He presented strategies setting up this type of dialogue, showing all participants that they now had knowledge to share in this type of dialogue. He then encouraged participants to share their own experiences and build on their collective ideas to brainstorm ways to make such discussions as productive as possible.

One participant told of how she found that people were unexpectedly interested in her time spent abroad and how she found them to be honestly curious. Another spoke of using humor and simple, concrete analogies when explaining a foreign culture.

**Lina Ejeilat**, a staff writer for *JO Magazine* and co-founder of citizen journalism site *7iber.com*, organized a workshop entitled, “Citizen Journalism.” Ejeilat discussed with participants the new phenomenon of citizen journalism and how they could navigate this genre of media effectively. Citizen journalism is the type of investigative news created online by amateur journalists and bloggers who share news on collective blog sites.

This type of media is a strong example of how connectedness can enhance communication, and Ejeilat navigated through several different sites on an overhead projector for demonstration to participants. Ejeilat explained that while citizen journalism will not take the place of traditional media, it can sometimes get access to places that mainstream media misses. Since citizen journalism websites are often small, community-based sites, they are sometimes viewed as more authentic and “honest” than mainstream media, she said. However, they can also be less trustworthy since they lack the professional standards of traditional journalism.

Participants will be offered citizen journalism opportunities in the post-conference activities.

## PRESS COVERAGE

The conference was shown live on a webcast by Jordan Days, a new online television station in Jordan, which focuses programming on democracy development in the region ([www.Jordandays.com](http://www.Jordandays.com)). Iranian private television station Press TV covered the first day of the conference, and Petra News, Jordan’s national news agency, published an article two days after the conference ([www.petra.gov.jo](http://www.petra.gov.jo)). A *Jordan Times* reporter was present during the full-length of the conference and later published a feature piece on the conference.



*The Jordan Days website showed the conference live.*

**POST-CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES**

On the morning of the conference's final day, participants worked in small groups to set the foundations for their future connections as conference alumni. Each participant was given the choice of joining of five activism groups: blogging, internet journalism, TV/radio reporting, print media, and advocacy/outreach. Through their memberships in these specific communities, participants will continue the dialogue and discussions begun during the conference. Each project will be an autonomous, participant-driven group, with members from all three conferences.



In addition, two representatives, one American and one Jordanian, were elected by their peers to travel to Washington, D.C. on behalf of their fellow conference participants. There, they will meet with key policymakers and others to discuss the conference recommendations and convey the ideas of multicultural youth leaders.

## BIOGRAPHIES

### Keynote Speaker

**Mohammad Halaiqa.** His Excellency Dr. Mohammad Halaiqa was born in Shioukh in 1951, obtained his BSc in chemistry from the University of Jordan in 1976 and a Ph.D in industrial chemistry from University of Leeds. He was director general of the Amman Chamber of Industry from 1990-1992, before assuming the posts of director (1992-1993) and assistant secretary general (1993-1994) of the Higher Council for Science and Technology. He also served as director general of the Jordan Export Development Corporation from 1994 to 1997, and secretary general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade from 1997 until he was appointed as minister of industry and trade in 2000 and then the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, 2002, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Administrative Development, 2003, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce and Industry in 2004, after that he was appointed as a senator, Now he is the President of the Arab Academy for Banking and Financial Sciences.

### Panel 1: Youth Language, Culture, and Student Exchange Programs

**Alain McNamara** is the Executive Director of the Jordanian-American Commission for Educational Exchange, also known as the Bi-national Fulbright Commission in Jordan. Mr. McNamara brings over 40 years of senior management experience in a multicultural international environment promoting and administering educational exchange and development programs to the Commission and to Jordan. He left AMIDEAST, Inc the leading American non-profit organization promoting cooperation and understanding between the Middle East and the United States, in 1994, as Vice President and the organization's most senior field representative. In the early 1980s, Mr. McNamara was the Director of the AMIDEAST office in Amman and, until March 1994, was the Country Director in Egypt. He has vast experience in managing human resource development programs for educational institutions and private businesses with government agencies, international organizations both in the Middle East and the United States. He has worked closely with every host government in the Middle East and North Africa and the Department of State's Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau and its various Embassies in this region. Mr. McNamara grew-up in Morocco, Korea and the United States and has lived and traveled extensively in the Middle East and North Africa. He is multi-lingual and received degrees from the University of Aix-en-Provence in France and from Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

**Osama Alshurafa** is the acting director of the Qasid Institute for Arabic Language in Amman. He graduated from California State University and began his career as a circuit design engineer at Boeing Satellite Systems. After working at AxiomTek Technologies, he realized his ability to excel in sales and marketing. Charismatic and well-spoken, he went on to represent AxiomTek at numerous tradeshows, while overseeing the entire Mid-West region of the US, Mexico, and Florida. His knack for being able to effectively communicate and relate to others led him to Amman in 2006. Of Arab-American heritage himself, he admired the Qasid Institute's vision to encourage cultural cooperation between the US and the Arab world through language and cultural studies. He currently manages and directs all campus operations for Qasid, as well as arranging study-abroad groups and NGO contracts.

**Lina Arafat**, a Political Science and Mass Communications graduate, holds a higher degree from the United Nations Graduate Study Program on International Relations, Geneva, Switzerland. She currently is the MEPI Alumni Coordinator managing different programs and activities related to civil society, women, and youth. Prior to joining the MEPI Network, Lina managed initiatives funded by MEPI and USAID in the Middle East and North Africa. Lina also started her career as a Jordanian Diplomat, then as an international civil servant, joining different UN agencies and serving at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. Lina has been very active in international youth activities, leading initiatives in Jordan such as Youth Building the Future, serving as President of Youth Association for development, an NGO in Jordan, and as a participant in the Youth Consultation

in the Arab Preparatory meeting for the Fourth World Conference for Women. She was a member of (AIESEC) Association International Des Etudiants En Science Economic Et Commerciales.

**David Mees** is Cultural Attaché at the U.S. Embassy, in Amman, Jordan. Mr. Mees started his foreign service career in 1988 in the former Yugoslavia. After a year in Belgrade, he witnessed the fall of communism in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He was the last U.S. diplomat to be "our man in Sarajevo" before the civil war. He then did a tour in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and one in Peshawar, Pakistan. In Peshawar he ran an American Center that did as much outreach to the Afghans as to the Pakistanis of the N.W.F.P. In 1996, he returned to the Balkans and helped set up an American Center in Pristina, Kosovo, and a civic education program in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Republika Srpska. After three years as public diplomacy desk officer at the State Department's Bureau of European Affairs, he worked in Reykjavik, Iceland, as Public Affairs Officer. He then studied Arabic and has been in Jordan since August, 2005. David was born and grew up in The Netherlands. Just as his mother, uncle and grandfather, he studied art at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He later earned a Master's degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC.

### **Workshop: Organizing an International Discussion**

**Vicente Garcia** is the Program Director for Americans for Informed Democracy's Global Peace and Security Program and Hope Not Hate initiative. Garcia organizes summits and provides trainings throughout the United States and several European, Middle Eastern, and African regions that engage young people to influence U.S. foreign policy. This includes topics such as democracy development, nuclear nonproliferation, US-Muslim relations, role of civil society, peacekeeping, etc. Trainings include workshops on facilitating dialogue, grassroots organizing, framing conversations, and outreach. Garcia received his BA degree in Government and Philosophy from Georgetown University and MA degree in International Conflict Analysis, with a concentration on US and European foreign policy in the Middle East and North Africa, from the Brussels School of International Studies (BSIS) where he wrote his dissertation on "Social Capital Investment and the Rise of Political Islam". Before AID, he was a Program Associate at the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office in Brussels, Belgium, and contributed articles on EU-MENA relations. He has US policy experience interning for Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz in Washington, DC, and speaks Spanish and French.

### **Panel 2: American Foreign Policy in Iraq, Effects on Jordanian Society**

**Hala Sarraf** is an Iraqi citizen residing in Jordan since 2003. She is the founder of Iraq Health Aid Organization, a Non Profit, Non Government organization specializing in Health. In 2006, she was selected as New Leaders Grant Award winner under the Fulbright program for bringing mutual understanding between US and Iraqi students. She graduated from Columbia University in 2007, specializing in Health Policy and Management; married with three children, a medical doctor, civil engineering student and Teen Peace Ambassador 2008.

**David Greene** is Political Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan. Mr. Greene arrived in Amman in summer 2006 for a year of advanced Arabic study prior to assuming his duties as chief of the political section in July 2007. His previous assignment was in Washington DC as Deputy Director of the State Department's Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs, where he had also served as economic officer. Previous overseas tours were in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, as Refugee Coordinator, and in the political section of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo. David joined the Department of State in 1996. He speaks Arabic and Vietnamese, and holds a Bachelors degree in Government from Harvard University and a Masters degree in International Relations from Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

**Mahjoob Zweiri** is a specialist in Iran and Middle East Politics. He received his Ph.D in Modern History of Iran from Tehran University in May 2002. Since March 2003, he was a research fellow and then a director of the Centre for Iranian Studies in the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at

Durham University. His core areas of research are Domestic Politics of Iran, Iran's Foreign Policy, Iran-Arab Relations, Shi'ism, and Political Islam, He has written widely on Iran and Shia in both Persian and English. He has also contributed numerous articles to international referred academic journals. In addition to Arabic, Dr Zweiri has fluency in Farsi and English.

**Zainab al-Suwaij.** Granddaughter of Basra's leading cleric, Zainab was one of the few women to join the failed 1991 intifada uprising against Saddam Hussein. She fled Iraq and eventually became an American citizen. Following the shock of the September 11 terror attacks, Zainab left her teaching position at Yale to co-found the AIC. An outspoken advocate for women's equality and interfaith understanding, Zainab has published editorials in the three largest American newspapers: The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today. She has appeared on NPR, BBC, Al-Jazeera, CBS, ABC, MSNBC, CNN, and Fox. Over the past several years, Zainab has directed AIC's women's empowerment programs in southern Iraq, leading a grassroots team that operates without international security. She has testified to Congress, lectured at Harvard, and participated in interfaith events around the world. Named an "Ambassador of Peace" by the Interreligious and International Peace Council, Zainab has received Dialogue on Diversity's Liberty Award and was recognized as "2006 International Person of the Year" by the National Liberty Museum.

### **Panel 3: Youth Cyber-Activism, Tool of American-Jordanian Communication**

**Marc Lynch** is Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University. His most recent book, *Voices of the New Arab Public: Al-Jazeera, Iraq, and Middle East Politics Today*, was published by Columbia University Press. He writes frequently on Arab politics, Iraq, and Islamist movements in journals such as Foreign Affairs, the National Interest, the Wilson Quarterly, Foreign Policy, the European Journal of International Relations, Arab Media and Society, and Politics and Society. He also runs the influential Middle East politics blog Abu Aardvark ([www.abuaardvark.com](http://www.abuaardvark.com))

**Ahmad Humeid** is co-founder, CEO/Design Director, SYNTAX. Ahmad has been involved in various pioneering publishing, design and technology ventures in the Middle East, where he assumed leading positions in design, branding, user experience, information technology and internet consulting. His Amman based company, SYNTAX, works with companies as well as governmental, non-governmental and international organizations to create innovate brands, design and user experiences. In late 2005, Ahmad cofounded TootCorp ([www.itoot.net](http://www.itoot.net)) a new web venture focusing on the potential of self-publishing and user created media in the Arab world. In November 2006, TootCorp launched Ikbis.com, the first Arab photo and video sharing site, which was described by Newsweek magazine as the Arab YouTube. In early 2007, TootCorp launched watwet.com a social networking tool for mobile and web platforms. He is a regular contributing writer in the regional press on issues of design and technology. His writings can be found at [www.360east.com](http://www.360east.com) where he maintains a blog. His podcast, Mixup Arabia, in which he talks about media, technology and culture, was the first podcast produced from the Arab region. Ahmad is also a digital video and audio enthusiast and has produced a number of short videos both for commercial and non-commercial purposes.

**Esra'a Al Shafei** is the Executive Director of Mideast Youth. Her work on the internet bridges gaps of faith and geography to unite young people committed to fostering constructive discourse in the Middle East. She is the project coordinator of a series of initiatives including the newly launched Afghan Press as well as the Free Kareem campaign. She was a recent recipient of a Berkman Award from the Berkman Center of Internet and Society at Harvard Law School.

**Nicholas Seeley** is the chief editor of JO Magazine, a monthly magazine that publishes news, culture, politics and analysis from Amman. He moved to Jordan in 2004. He studied Journalism at Northwestern University, and has written for newspapers in Washington, DC and Phnom Penh, Cambodia, as well as a number of other magazines and web sites. When he's not working on JO, he freelances, writes science fiction and directs plays. He has never had a blog, he seldom updates his

website, and his Facebook status changes once every three months. Sometimes he uses a typewriter.

#### **Panel 4: U.S. Foreign Aid Programs for Political Reform**

**Nadia Bushnaq** is Director of the Family Guidance and Awareness Center. Ms. Bushnaq is founder and director of the Family Guidance and Awareness Center (FGAC) which was established 1996. The aim of the FGAC is to holistically guide families to attain a better well-rounded life. The Center raises Awareness and educates Society on social and economic variables and ways to comfort them. In addition to assisting those who are subject to abuse and social pressures, Ms. Bushnaq and FGAC hope to lift their well-being and teach them coping mechanisms to deal with pressure. She is a dedicated advocate for women's rights and the socially excluded, and also managed to mobilize efforts locally and the support of international organizations for the benefit of her community. She has participated in several National Committees including the Royal Committee of The National Agenda for Jordan, and the Management Team of the National Project for Family Protection. She is a member of the Board of trustees of the Hashimeiah University, President of the General Federation of Jordanian Women, and president of the Housewives Society / Zarqa. She was also one of the first Jordanian women candidates to run in Jordan's Parliamentary elections in 1989, 1993 and 2003.

**Kathryn Stevens** has served as Director of USAID Jordan's Office of Program Management since August 2007. A career foreign service officer, Ms. Stevens previously led USAID democracy and governance programs in Ukraine, Serbia, and West Bank/Gaza. Married with one child, Ms. Stevens is from Fort Worth, Texas. She holds a M.A. in Russian Studies from Georgetown University and a B.A. in history, magna cum laude, from Duke University. Ms. Stevens is proficient in Russian and a beginning student of Arabic.

**Sa'ed Karajah** is a Senior Partner, Legal Counselor and Attorney at Law for Karajah & Associates Law Firm,. Since 1996 Mr. Karajah has been involved in community development projects with UNICEF, Jordan River Foundation, Save the Children-Jordan, and AMIR. Currently he is a board member in the Jordan River Foundation, one of the most prominent NGOs in the country. Past experiences include assisting the Ministerial Committee with the draft of the Companies Law in cooperation with INTAJ, and participating in a seminar on Civil Society and Rule of Law under the auspices of the Friedrich Neumann Foundation. Mr. Karajah has published a booklet on Establishing Civil Associations & Intellectual Property Rights of Arab Artists & Intellectuals, and under the sponsorship of ICNL has produced a research paper entitled "Civil Society in the Arab World: The Missing Concept."

**Anne Peters** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Politics at the University of Virginia, where her studies are concentrated within comparative political economy and the politics of development. Through case-study research of Egypt, Jordan, South Korea, and Taiwan, her dissertation tries to explain the impact of foreign aid upon developmental institutions as a function of regime coalition policy preferences operating under the constraints of modern state-building. Her other research interests include science and technology policy, regional economic cooperation, and international financial institutions. Ms. Peters earned her M.A. in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia in 2004, and has been the recipient of awards from the Miller Center (2008-2009), the American Center of Oriental Research/ Council of American Overseas Research Centers (2007) and the U.S. Fulbright Program (Egypt, 2007-2008).

#### **Workshop: Citizen Journalism & International Blogging**

**Lina Ejeilat** is a 25 year-old journalist who is passionate about media and community work. She enjoys documentary film-making and working with all kinds of creative media tools .She believes that media activism has a central role in addressing the region's challenges. Lina got her degree in Electrical Engineering, and then worked in youth development programs before becoming fully dedicated to journalism, and is currently a write for JO magazine. She also helped establish 7iber.com, a citizen journalism project.

## **Organizing Committee**

**Mohammad Azraq** holds a degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Jordan and worked as a volunteer/freelancer for the United Nations University/International Leadership Institute (UNU) assisting the Programme Officer in charged of youth and women affairs. He is a member of the Jordanian Danish Youth Dialogue Centre, writes occasionally for Mideast Youth (a regional blog), and reports on the Jordanian blogosphere for Global Voices. He attended a variety of youth workshops in Jordan and abroad such as "U.S Democracy Strategy: An American-Jordanian Dialogue" in spring 2007.

**Sami Hourani** is a 5th year medical student at the University of Jordan and a youth activist who has organized and participated in many events including the Harvard WorldMun conference in Geneva, Switzerland; Youth Leadership and Civic Engagement in Carthage, Tunisia and United Colors in the Czech Republic. Mr. Hourani is a member of "Kolna El Urdun" youth commission. In 2007 he founded Leaders of Tomorrow, and he organized its first annual conference, "The Jordanian Society, Between East and West, Past and Future" in the summer of 2007. In 2008 Sami presented a media panel at the MEPI Regional Summit 2008 Building a Network of Reformers. In 2004 Sami won the first prize for web design in a pan-Arab world contest.

**Liana Paris** has just completed a year in Amman as a Rotary International Ambassadorial Scholar during which she studied Arabic and Conflict Resolution in the University of Jordan Faculty of Graduate Studies. In June, she will begin work as the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Program Assistant at the International Organization for Migration, Iraq Mission. In May 2007 Liana graduated with an A.B. in International Relations from Brown University, where she also studied Arabic for four years and French at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris.

**Judith van Raalten** graduated in 2003 from the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands, with a MA Degree in Philosophy. She was a philosophy lecturer at the University of Hawaii and a researcher in the Psychology department where she coordinated a project researching identity among youth in the Middle East and the Balkans. In 2006 Judith participated in the Human Rights Delegation for Young Leaders to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Her photography exhibition Bosnia's Aftermath was on display in the US and Bosnia through the Karpf Peace Award. In 2007 she was in Amman, Jordan conducting her research on the young Palestinians in Jordan for her MA in Conflict Resolution at Brandeis University (USA) Currently, she is field researcher for an international immigration studies, program coordinator at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management to establish a PhD program in Social Policy, Conflict, and Coexistence, and executive director of Leaders of Tomorrow.

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