

***Between Revolution and Repression:  
Democratic Transitions in the Middle East and North Africa?***

Cairo and Ottawa June 2, 2011 Round Table

Report and Policy Recommendations



Round table report by Razmik Panossian and Marc Lemieux, with notes from Elizabeth Kellett and Yasmine Farret

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## Introduction

*“...Events unfolding in the Arab world today are profoundly significant and hopeful. Despite political turbulence in a number of national settings and the likelihood that deep changes in social structures and political cultures will only come with persistent striving, this remains a moment of great possibility – a moment for affirming what has been accomplished, and for looking to the future with openness to fresh possibilities.” – Nathan Funk*

On June 2, 2011, Peacebuild, with the financial support of the International Development Research Centre, convened a day-long discussion on the tumultuous changes taking place in the Middle East and North Africa.

Objectives for the roundtable were to share up-to-date information on current and longer-term political issues and dynamics, to assess areas for possible support for democratic transitions in the region, identify areas of relevant Canadian expertise – diaspora, NGO, academic, business sector, governmental -- and, based on the discussion, generate a set of policy options and/or recommendations for people-to-people support, NGOs, academics and the Government of Canada.

Participants in Cairo, Ottawa and Montreal were linked into a wide-ranging discussion, which first focused on hearing activist and expert views from the epicentre of regional change – Egypt. Among the questions explored with human rights activist Hossam Baghat, strategic analyst Mustafa El-Labbad, activist author May Telmissany and IDRC regional expert Roula El-Rifai were the makeup of the reform movements in the region and their objectives, what is the real extent of political Islam’s influence in the Middle East and what has been the role of the armed forces in the transitions?

In Ottawa participants then turned to the role of diasporas in contributing to the democracy movements in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria and elsewhere, and the dynamics of, and obstacles to, citizen engagement. Presenters were the international diplomat Mohktar Lamani, Tunisian-Canadian activist Haroun Bouazzi, Egyptian conflict resolution expert Samuel Rizk, Georgetown University politics and media analyst Adel Iskandar and David Comerford, president of the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations.

A third panel took on questions of what types of Canadian governance and democratization expertise could best serve to support democratic transitions in the region. It was made up of governance and electoral expert Grant Kippen, Rights & Democracy programmer Lara Arjan, governance expert Mazen Chouaib, legal reform specialist Reem Bahdi and religion and peacebuilding scholar and practitioner Nathan Funk.

In addition to the presenters, 30 other participants and the panel moderators – Peter Jones, Ann Weston, Marc Lemieux and Razmik Panossian -- brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the deliberations.

What follows is an analytical summary of the main points discussed, followed by a series of recommendations to the Government of Canada and to civil society organizations.

## **Executive Summary**

The revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa are profoundly changing these societies. Real transformation, however, requires on-going engagement. “Our transition has not really started yet,” one speaker observed. Understanding these changes necessitates both in-depth analysis and a long-term perspective. Hence, the first point that emerged is the complexity of the ongoing revolutions. There is a multiplicity of views within each of the countries regarding some fundamental questions. For example, on what foundations should the new Egypt be built, secular or inspired by Islam? What should be the sequencing between elections (parliamentary and presidential), constitutional reform and transitional justice? Not even the actors involved in these societies have clear answers – they simultaneously are agents of change and subjects to much larger structural forces. One thing is certain: there is no pre-set formula to be followed. The MENA uprisings are quite different from past experiences of revolutionary change insofar as they are “leaderless;” there is no “vanguard” party, no charismatic leader, no institutionalized leadership. They have so far been deeply democratic practices. To consolidate their participative and egalitarian impulses a new concept and practice of citizenship is required that is based on democratic principles, including the rule of law, social justice and dignity. This not only requires institution building but it also entails cultural transformation. There is a demographic challenge here: the schism between the new and older generations and their differing perspectives on popular mobilization, political authority and civic engagement. MENA revolutions are also having an impact on regional dynamics, especially on the Israel-Palestine negotiations. There is a real “fear factor” within Israel. Moreover, changes in the region have profoundly affected diasporas. Interest in “home” countries, the desire to link with the movements there and mobilization in Canada, the US and elsewhere, have energized and to some degree united diaspora communities. This will no doubt have an impact on Canadian domestic politics and will likely influence the future of Canada’s policies toward the region. New media was crucial in the mobilization behind the revolutions, as well as in the links between homeland and diaspora. There is no doubt about that. However, there is some disagreement about whether new media was a mere tool or if it is changing social dynamics within the MENA region. Needless to say, the military remains a crucial actor in these transitions. Its reform, civilian oversight and the de-securitization of the state remain vital challenges. Finally, demands for transitional justice have emerged as well, although the commonly used terminology of “truth commission” and “reconciliation” does not resonate within the Arab world. In terms of recommendations, there are calls for substantive Canadian engagement in the region, from technical support to civil society-to-civil society linkages, based on humility and consistency.

## **Panel I: Currents of change**

*Speakers: Mustafa El-Labbad, Hossam Bahgat, May Telmissany, Roula El-Rifai, plus opening comments from Ann Weston and David Lord.*

The “Arab Spring” began in early 2011 but what the final outcome will be is far from clear. There are three distinct possibilities: real democratic change, partial or cosmetic concessions as real power remains in the hands of pre-revolutionary elites, or successful repression. While everyone at this roundtable champions real democratic change, elements of all three possibilities are currently at play in the region. What is it that we can do to ensure a successful transition to democracy and its subsequent consolidation? This was the overarching question at the heart of our deliberations.

Four sets of actors are playing a central role in Egypt: the military (who ultimately rejected President Hosni Mubarak), the Muslim Brotherhood (who remain the best organized political group in opposition), the business elite (who control substantial portions of the economy, including the private media) and the youth movement along with civil society organizations such as human rights NGOs (who actually made the revolution in Tahrir Square). It seems that some sort of an “alliance,” or at least a loose convergence of interests, is emerging at this point between the Muslim Brotherhood, the military and the business elite. This “triangle” is leading to the marginalization of the youth movement and the non-religious civil society groups, which were at the forefront of the revolution.

These dynamics are indicative of the multiplicity of perspectives and interests in the country, and we all need to come to terms with them. All of these actors are part of the fabric of Egyptian society and current political realities. We know the Military Council currently ruling Egypt will not leave – and they do want to return to the barracks -- without some concessions from future civilian leaders pertaining to the military’s institutional (including economic) interests. We also know that the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as other more extreme religious parties, can freely operate now, further strengthening their support base and political impact.

Of the four sets of actors, the youth movement and human rights NGOs remain the weakest in terms of institutional capacity and unclear leadership. This sector should be targeted for assistance to enable its consolidation as an effective political force.

For example, the human rights movement in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world has historically concentrated on exposing violations by repressive regimes while operating in a hostile environment. Now, where the revolutions have succeeded, human rights activists are being called upon to formulate policy in this domain. They no longer need to prove the violations, but rather they need to suggest ways to prevent them, to provide an action plan to the new governments. They are not equipped to do this; they must learn how to navigate in new waters, operating in a much more open environment.

The new agenda for democracy and human rights activists includes advocating for civilian control over the military (e.g. parliamentary and judicial oversight), ensuring that newly-won media freedoms are not rolled back, advocating for a comprehensive and systematic reform process instead of ad hoc changes currently being undertaken, continuing the struggle for justice, entrenching civil liberties, including gender equality and religious freedoms, as well as suggesting economic reforms that ensure the inclusion of the poor. In short, civil society must ensure that another political system based on human rights violations and injustice does not re-emerge.

Transitional justice, including reconciliation and truth-telling commissions, amnesty programs and the like could generate beneficial initiatives that would further entrench democracy. But there is not an “Arab model” in this domain. In fact, the notion of “reconciliation” does not have a positive connotation in MENA as it is associated with failed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Even the language of transitional justice is foreign in the region. People think of Rwanda and South Africa but not about their own societies. This is unfortunate because people do not realize how broken social relations are and how much peacebuilding work is required to repair them. This is the so-called “soft side” of rebuilding societies. In addition to political and economic restructuring, political culture must change so equitable social relations can be established and pluralism emphasized.

There is a lively discussion in Egypt on the foundations on which the country should be rebuilt, including debates pertaining to the constitution. The “Secular State” initiative, for example, wants to eventually abolish Article Two of the constitution that states that, “Islam is the Religion of the State, Arabic is its official language, and the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia).” Citing the equality of all citizens, and fearing the country’s Islamicization to the detriment of its minorities and of human rights, Secular State has embarked on a campaign of education and advocacy. Others, however, disagree with this approach, wary of opening up the “identity debate.” In their view, this would be detrimental to the democratic movement as it would force Egyptians to choose between Islam and secularism. In fact, they argue, such an initiative will benefit the Islamists who will rally people based on identity politics, destroying the current consensus on democratic principles.

At the root of such debates is the fear of the Muslim Brotherhood and radical Islamists. If in power, will they turn Egypt into an illiberal state or will they play by the rules of the democratic game as a political party, much like the religious right in the West? Some believe the risks posed by the Islamists are exaggerated, while others are quite apprehensive. As one speaker aptly stated, “We have the Tea Party in our country too.” Others warn that counter-revolutions are already in the making by anti-democratic forces and that one repressive regime can be replaced by another. An Islamic model of politics, coupled with an economic system imbued with religious overtones and underpinned by a conservative economic class close to the Muslim Brotherhood, can emerge as the dominant force in Egypt. It will be a challenge to keep the public space secular and multi-dimensional. While it should also be remembered that the Muslim Brotherhood itself has been deeply affected by the recent events and its youth wing is

much closer to the democratic movement than the party's leadership, some forces within society are using the language of human rights and democracy to pursue other agendas.

Political debates aside, the deteriorating economic situation should not be forgotten. It is a major threat to the gains of the revolutions in the region. To counter the threat, political reform and economic reform must be combined. The economic challenges are not just confined to corruption and transparency, which are always mentioned, but relate also to systemic problems that need to be addressed. The uprisings are not just about dictatorship, but also about social justice.

At the regional level, no one knows what impact the transitions will have on the peace process between Israel and the Palestine. However, there are some indications. First, we know that the mobilization and organization of youth played a role in the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. Second, Egypt is playing a more active role in Palestine; for instance, Egypt's military is in discussion with Hamas, and there is even talk of relocating Hamas offices from Syria to Egypt. Third, there has emerged a real fear in Israel regarding the country's further isolation in the region as formerly friendlier Arab countries pursue more hard-line policies, mindful of public opinion resentful that endless negotiations have led nowhere. Finally, in light of the military intervention in Libya, some people in the region worry "where next?" The fear is that the West could intervene elsewhere and directly or indirectly crush democratization movements.

The task ahead is nothing less than rebuilding countries after political revolutions – from security sector reform to universities, from local government reform to economic justice. For some, the time to fight on every front is now. Others want to sequence the various challenges. What is certain is the requirement to be flexible, combining idealism with realism. In all countries the situation remains in flux. For instance, as soon as a "road map" was determined in Egypt, it changed. The initial "map" envisioned parliamentary elections first (to have a constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution), followed by constitutional change, then another parliamentary election (legislative assembly), then presidential elections. But the debate continues. Due to demonstrations and popular pressure, it now seems that the constitution will be written before parliamentary elections. Others disagree, wanting to hold elections as soon as possible to get the army out of government. For them, writing a constitution first, by experts, while the Military Council is the provisional government, is anti-democratic.

The entire MENA region is going through a period of wrenching and fundamental change. In some countries the revolutions have succeeded, in others protests continue and regimes brutally crack down. Daunting tasks remain everywhere. But the unprecedented enthusiasm for democratic change remains unabated.



## **Panel II: Citizen engagement and external support**

*Moderator: Ann Weston. Speakers: Adel Iskandar, David Camerford, Mokhtar Lamani, Samuel Rizk, Haroun Bouazzi (by teleconference).*

Revolutions do not just happen, they are made. And their roots run deep in society. In the case of the Middle East and North Africa, youth and civil society actors reacted against the stagnation their societies faced for decades. For too long they had been told by their own governments that the choice was between al-Qaeda's brand of violent social and political change or submission to the authoritarian status quo. The same argument was made to foreign powers in the West. The demonstrators throughout the Arab world are showing how erroneous this thinking was and how it was used to prop up stagnant, repressive regimes.

The revolutions, moreover, highlighted the hypocrisy of the West – the gap between its rhetoric and its actions as well as its inconsistency from country to country within the region – while at the same time exposing the emptiness of al-Qaeda's rhetoric of violence and extremism as the only avenue of change. There was a conscious decision by the mass movements in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and elsewhere not to use violence. "Salmi," Arabic for peaceful, was heard in every protest movement throughout the region. The movements were truly home grown, inclusive, based on broad coalitions and emphasized citizen engagement. The new societies the protestors want to build are based on principles of citizenship, human rights and respect for pluralism.

The impact of the revolution on Muslim-Christian relations in Egypt is noteworthy. Although it is too soon to conclude that there has been substantial progress, there seems to be some amelioration in inter-communal relations despite episodes of violence instigated by remnants close to the *ancien régime*. In the past, under Mubarak, Muslim-Christian relations were treated as part of "national security" and therefore dealt with as a military matter. Informal compromises were reached where there was conflict and since there were no guarantees to protect minorities, Christian communities relied on themselves instead of the state to defend their rights and interests. The higher sectarian tensions rose, the more inter-faith dialogue initiatives proliferated, as if the responses to the tensions were having little or no effect. After

the ouster of Mubarak on 25 January, there is room for the “Other,” a willingness to accommodate minorities and to collaborate in the spirit of democracy.

The use of brute force against peaceful protestors is always a turning point between the state and its citizens. Brute force had the effect of further empowering the protestors by exposing the myth that the state was genuinely protective of its citizens. The youth movement saw right through this paternalistic sham. Young people systematically undermined the power of the dictatorship using new technologies. The uprisings were not just against specific dictators, they were critiques of the very role and nature of the state.

New technologies are at the heart of the democratic movement. The virtual public space they helped to create provided a dynamic and extensive environment of deliberation. It was a space that could not be controlled or shut down easily. It also provided an arena for consensus building. For instance, extensive virtual discussions were held in Egypt regarding the importance of *peaceful* protest. The egalitarianism of cyberspace brought people and issues together that were usually apart. The social and political components of the mass movement were intertwined. People even voted on issues of priority in this virtual town hall. Through new media the regime’s human rights violations and abuses were exposed. This in turn helped to minimize impunity as audiovisual documentation was presented to counter government lies. Citizens became journalists and even outperformed the mainstream media in terms of coverage and news dissemination. New technologies not only helped Arab diasporas to engage in the movement, but played a significant role in facilitating the flow of information, linking people together and providing platforms for discussion.

However, as important as new technologies are, they should not be credited for carrying out the revolution. As one speaker put it, “Facebook did not make the revolution, people did it!” Facebook, Twitter and other virtual spaces played an important role, but one that should not be exaggerated. In Tunisia, people went to the streets without checking their Facebook pages. Importantly, however, videos and photos taken were uploaded onto virtual spaces, enabling news networks such as Al Jazeera to spread them even more widely. New technologies were certainly instrumental in linking Tunisian-Canadians to the protests on the streets of Tunis.

The Tunisian diaspora in Canada is small – no more than 16,000 in total, 7,000 of them living in Montreal – but it was effective because it was already organized before the uprising started. The diaspora was instrumental in exposing the regime’s violations and President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali’s excesses. Tunisians in Canada successfully engaged with the Canadian media and the public, passing on the key messages of the democratic movement. Significantly, this changed how mainstream Canadians view the Arab world. Canadian citizens of all backgrounds could recognize their own faces in the protests held in far away places.

After Ben Ali’s departure, the Tunisian diaspora changed its focus. It mobilized public opinion in Canada against the arrival of certain members of his family in Montreal. Due to its advocacy, Canadian laws were changed allowing the Canadian government to freeze the assets in Canada of foreign dictators and their families. Currently, the Tunisian diaspora is focusing on domestic

changes within the homeland. The Constituent Assembly in Tunisia that is going to rewrite the constitution will have representatives from diaspora communities. Currently, the diaspora's media activism is not as prominent since the media in Tunisia is free. At this point it is best to minimize foreign intervention in Tunisia so that Tunisians themselves can decide the future of their country.

It should also be noted that the Tunisian diaspora organizations helped other Arab communities in Canada to better organize themselves and stage public demonstrations in support of the democratic revolutions in their own countries.

Diasporas are not coherent or unified entities. There are nearly half a million Canadian Arabs. They are divided along country of origin, religion, ideology (secular, religious, liberal, traditional), reasons for leaving (immigrant or refugee), class, etc. There are a plethora of Arab-Canadian organizations, from community-based social services to national institutions such as the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations and the Canadian Arab Federation. In the past, the national organizations have had significant difficulty in mobilizing Canadians of Arab origin. There has been some activism on the Israel-Palestine issue, and after September 11, on the human rights of Arab-Canadians. Now, Arabs abroad are mobilizing around events in their home countries, as if the diaspora communities were in "incubation," waiting for the "street" in the region. Priorities are converging between the diaspora and the homeland.

Many initiatives are emerging from the diaspora. Some abroad want to relocate to Egypt or Tunisia to contribute to the democratic movement. Others would like to go as short-term experts. The values of human rights, rule of law, tolerance and pluralism are bringing Western diaspora communities together, and simultaneously, through their involvement in the revolutions, further entrenching these values in their home countries. But this is only one side of the story. Diasporas are influenced by the host countries in which they live. For instance, Egyptians who have gone to work in Persian Gulf countries often come back with more conservative values, influenced by anti-democratic ideas and radical notions of Islam. In short, diasporas can be double-edged swords. Even though diasporas were not, metaphorically speaking, part of the "Tahrir Square social contract," their contributions to the democratic movements are generally much appreciated in their home countries.

The Canadian government has expressed firm pro-Israeli views that clash with the perspectives of many within the Arab diaspora. This has been a challenge for Canadian Arabs. However, as diaspora organizations better mobilize, as they foster more debate within Canada on the country's foreign policy vis-a-vis the Middle East, and as they further engage the policy making establishment in Ottawa and the provincial capitals, they will manage to eventually influence government positions.



### **Panel III: Change drivers and support for democratization**

*Moderator: Marc Lemieux. Speakers: Nathan Funk, Lara Arjan, Reem Bahdi, Grant Kippen Mazen Chouaib*

Among the questions being asked of Canadians during fact-finding missions are : How elections and electoral systems can best meet international standards of transparency and accountability? How to go from mobilization to representation in a constitution that truly reflects popular expectations? How institutions of parliament / government can best be supported to serve the people? How local governance and local demands can be met?

The question of ensuring a Canadian role in post-Mubarak democracy-building is not one of finding Canadians but of funding them. Canadian expertise exists in election monitoring in the region, given an Elections Canada-sponsored international exercise in evaluating numerous criteria in components (election law, commission, registration, financing, etc) of the 2005 Iraqi electoral process. Canadians can and have assisted parliaments in the formulation of legislation and legislative reform projects. Canadian civil society groups host a variety of rapid-reaction core experts deployable for institutional-strengthening efforts. Recognizing that Canada supported the Mubarak regime over decades, any roles in aiding the democratic transition in Egypt must be tempered by a sensitivity to issues of transition ownership and available expertise. Canadians are welcome, for example, in the training of political parties which for the most part are in shambles. Given our global advocacy of human rights, we can assist in ensuring that legislation meets international human rights standards. If mutual trust and common goals of democratic governance are to be achieved, Canadians providing assistance must view their Egyptian interlocutors as peers and partners, not students or subordinates. Egypt is home to an ancient civilization much older than Canada. Developing a culture and commitment to human rights and the rule of law requires the consent of the general population. Legitimacy and accountability going forward is absolutely critical.

The revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt have offered Canadians the opportunity to reassess and to renew their relationships to societies in the region. As stated by one speaker, barriers of fear have been broken, capacities for nonviolent action have been discovered, and a new regional narrative has begun to emerge: a narrative of empowerment, dignity, and hope. The UN-sponsored Arab Human Development Reports (2002-05) outlined the region's deficits in knowledge, governance and gender equality. It offers a compelling road map for transformative change and should not be ignored.

As the region's civil society players strive to update resources, Canadians need to be good listeners before designing support programs. In this spirit, participants in the Arab Spring can benefit the proponents of democratic change by recording and detailing the stories and visions of their experience. One area that should be explored in depth is which sectors of the political framework and economy have experienced the greatest disruption?

Universities and researchers need to reach out and develop partnerships, and share curricula, research skills and training resources. Opportunities exist in building bridges between tradition and modernity, for example in the field of transitional justice with a focus on the Islamic criteria of forgiveness. Truth, justice and reconciliation have to be practiced in an Arab context.

Because of the complexity of inter-communal relations and sectarian tensions, careful studies of the sources and processes of inter-communal polarization may prove helpful in illuminating constructive steps, particularly if supplemented with training initiatives that bring local religious and civil society practitioners together with practitioners of religious and grassroots peacebuilding from other contexts.

Change cannot be realized without de-securitization of the state, the placing of limits on national security agencies so that they do not control every aspect of everyday life in Egypt. "The notion that the state, including law, is built to serve the people is not sufficiently entrenched across the Middle East." Given that security must now be reconstructed on the basis of principles that respect the will of the people, how can these forces be tamed? In Egypt and across the Middle East, the state security apparatus remains strong, in some cases omnipotent; they control the executive and the judiciary to varying degrees. As noted by a panellist, Canada's own national security agencies have connections to Middle Eastern agencies and although we claim that we do not condone torture our actions sometimes suggest otherwise. We need to be mindful of this as we approach the MENA region with programmes for democracy promotion.

The professionalization of law enforcement and judicial oversight agents presents wide scope for global exchange of skills. Egypt's judicial oversight agency is not empowered to compel the sharing of information, nor is it empowered to enforce recommendations. Canada's judicial experience and expertise could enable the judiciary to play a greater role in balancing the other branches of government, and maintain the transparency of legislative and executive powers.

Across the region there is a desperate need to understand what military courts are doing and their role in perpetrating political and social oppression. The reach of the region's military courts is profound, and in their current form, these courts undermine the rule of law and respect for the law. They are arbitrary and cannot be a part of a society built on law and justice. Canada could assist groups in the region to insist that their judiciary focus on promoting human dignity and values of citizenry over regime preservation and focusing on how to craft arguments from laws in order to defend human dignity. There exists a gap between

knowledge and action which requires a cultural shift inclusive of dialogue with civil society and officials, not just technical support to the legal community.

The international community has been too narrowly focused on electoral support at the expense of strengthening broader tools in the democracy-building toolbox. Because donor attention is often fragmented and inconsistent, the development of a democratic vision should be supported by a multi-government trust fund, which would enable sustainability and multi-sector inclusiveness. The success of governance structures in the region depends on the impartiality of long-standing institutions, not convenient and temporary personalities. Resources must be focused on the development and professionalization of institutions, experts and groups.

The Canadian government and other actors should provide some incentives for other intentional groups/stakeholders to come together to create a plan about what they should be doing, what they can work on together and how to pool their resources, to see beyond individual donor efforts.

The Egyptian people have shown their resilience and capacities to manage beyond the Mubarak regime, in particular during the immediate post-Mubarak period when lawlessness could have engulfed Cairo. Tahrir Square organizers proved the reverse of the Hobbesian premise -- that no state inevitably leads to chaos.

As for Canadian government policy, there has not been much direction so far on what it plans to do. No doubt, however, the biggest Canadian actor in democratic development in the MENA region – at least in terms of funding – will remain the government, even though the Middle East is a primary area of economic and political interest for Europeans and Americans, and not as much for Canada. There needs to be a debate about Government of Canada policy towards the region and about Canada's programmatic support for non-Canadian democracy assistance organizations, which has reduced the number of Canadian non-governmental experts, government officials or politicians, to work with.

Canada's engagement in the Middle East has been limited, episodic and inconsistent. If what we are witnessing now really is, as Nathan Funk argues, *"...a moment of great possibility – a moment for affirming what has been accomplished, and for looking to the future with openness to fresh possibilities,"* political leadership will be necessary to mobilize and sustain a constructive and durable engagement. It is entirely a matter of political will – which needs to change.

## **Panel IV: Recommendations for the future and next steps**

The last segment of the program was devoted to recommendations. Speakers and certain members of the audience suggested steps that could and should be taken. These, along with other suggestions that were mentioned throughout the day, are listed below.

### **For civil society**

1. Provide support to Egyptian / Tunisian civil society organizations to enable them to further consolidate their forces; such support can be technical aid as well as assistance aimed at improving coordination.
2. Advocate for the Government of Canada to develop a scheme of “matching funds” so that monies raised for democratic development by Canadian-based civil society organizations are doubled.
3. Advocate for the Canadian Government to support civil society organizations in the region and not just multilateral institutions.
4. Build institutional support for academic partnering and university-to-university links, increasing research collaboration that fosters dialogue, publications and policy papers on democratic values and institutions. The IDRC can take a lead on such initiatives.
5. Find mechanisms through which debate on the Middle East and North Africa can be fostered between Canadian civil society and the country’s political establishment. A national dialogue should be launched on Canada’s Middle East policy.
6. As social entities with economic clout and multiple interests in the betterment of their countries of origin, diasporas can play greater institution-building and developmental roles by being more creative in directing remittances. Instead of just family-to-family transfers, support can also go to NGOs and civil society initiatives.
7. A mapping exercise is needed to better understand the Canadian-Arab diaspora. This should cover existing groups, associations and community initiatives.

### **For the Government of Canada**

8. Conduct a wide-reaching, multi-sectoral and geographically-inclusive needs assessment in order to learn local needs, priorities and possible Canadian points of access before designing Canadian engagement and deploying Canadian expertise. We should be aware of gaps in Canadian credibility, as well as local needs and receptivity, so that our expertise is welcomed.
9. Deploy Canadians with expertise in specific domains (e.g. governance, anti-corruption) to the region to help with the post-revolutionary rebuilding.
10. Given the key roles played by youth and women in the revolutions, provide program support which engages youth groups and women’s organizations at a pan-Arab and pan-Muslim regional level, sharing experiences, technology and skills transfer, including comparative examples of keeping officials accountable.
11. Tackle the issue of constitutional education in many parts of the Arab world by developing awareness campaigns and exercises in democratization that involve

grassroots deliberations and ownership of the constitutional drafting process and electoral agenda. There needs to be a socio-political space for wide discussions on constitutional amendments.

12. Study the way new media has been used for empowerment, and how to increase the capacity of actors using new media to further entrench openness and democratic practices. There should be a right to communicate, reaching out to the poor and excluded who have no access to the internet.
13. Support judicial independence not solely by providing technical expertise but by helping to build an enabling environment for a judiciary that can act independently and has the courage and conviction to stand up to political interference. This means working with civil society and the executive at strategic points to create an enabling and empowering space for the judiciary.
14. Provide training in legislative formulation that is focused on promoting and protecting human dignity, not on regime preservation.
15. Develop a transitional justice model that combines Islamic, traditional and modern principles, that embraces the concept of forgiveness while minimizing impunity. Reconciliation, peace *and* justice must be reflected in such initiatives. Part of this endeavour is about having further discussions and initiatives aimed at security sector reform.
16. Given the Latin American model of the Andean office for Democratic Governance, establish a similar regional instrument in the MENA.
17. Use the human security framework and ensure that support is multi-dimensional, using the Arab Development Report as the basis of analysis and programming.
18. Use gender analysis in the development of all programming.
19. Support government institution to government institution relations, and professional development training.
20. Develop policy suggestions to protect religious minorities.
21. Develop programming with youth and children so that they are not left out of the democratic process and the dialogue shaping their futures.

## Presenters and Moderators

### In Cairo

**Hossam Bahgat** is the founder and director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), a Cairo-based independent human rights organization, which seeks to protect and promote the personal rights and freedoms of individuals and communities. Since 2002, the EIPR has used research, advocacy and litigation to promote and defend the rights to privacy, religious freedom, health, and bodily integrity. With training in political science and international human rights law, Bahgat is also the vice president of the Egyptian Association against Torture, an Advisory Board member of Egypt's New Woman Foundation, a Board member of the International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Fund for Global Human Rights. Bahgat is the recipient of 2010 Alison Des Forges Award for Extraordinary Activism from Human Rights Watch.

**Dr. Mustafa El-Labbad** is the director of the Cairo-based independent research center Al Sharq Center for Regional and Strategic Studies, which specializes in relations between the Arab world and Turkey and Iran. Dr. El-Labbad is also a syndicated columnist in leading Arab newspapers, a frequent television commentator on Iran and Turkey and Editor in Chief of “Sharqnameh”, a quarterly peer-reviewed magazine on Turkey, Iran and the Middle East. He holds a PhD degree in the political economy of the Middle East from Humboldt University, Berlin, and speaks Arabic, German, English and Persian.

**Roula El-Rifai** is an Ottawa-based International Development Research Centre expert on the Palestinian refugee issue and the Middle East peace process and reform processes in the Arab world. She previously managed IDRC's Middle East Unit, including policy-oriented research on the Palestinian refugee issue; a scholarship fund for Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon; and the Middle East Good Governance Fund, which focused on political parties and political Islam. Her current research focuses on the issue of compensation to Palestinian refugees, and on Palestinians living in host countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, in addition to democratization processes in the Arab world.

**May Telmissany** is an associate professor of cinema and Arabic studies at the University of Ottawa. In February 2011, a few days after Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down as president of Egypt, she launched an initiative calling for a secular state in Egypt and a website featuring videos and articles on the subject -- [www.dawlamadaneya.com](http://www.dawlamadaneya.com). Her most recent publications include a book of memoirs called *The Gates of Paradise* and a book of photography and text, *The Last Hammams of Cairo*, bath houses built during the Mamluk era that are now disappearing. Ms Telmissany is the co-editor with Stephanie Tara Schwartz of *Counterpoints: Edward Said's Legacy*, and the author of numerous articles on filmmakers such as Michel Khelifi, Nadir Moknèche, Amos Gitai, Deepa Mehta, Denys Arcand and Jean-Claude Lauzon.

## In Ottawa

**Lara Arjan** is a multilingual international development professional who has worked extensively in the Middle East North Africa Region across a range of projects from environment to peacebuilding and governance. She has successfully spearheaded youth and civic engagement programs, developed training modules and designed and delivered alternative media programs. Arjan is currently MENA Regional Programmes Officer at Rights & Democracy.

**Reem Bahdi** is a professor in the Faculty of Law, University of Windsor, and teaches courses in access to justice, tort law, and torture and national security. Her research focuses on the human rights dimensions of national security laws and policies as well as access to justice in the Middle East. Since 2005, she has codirected KARAMAH (The Project on Judicial Independence and Human Dignity) in Palestine. Supported by the Canadian International Development Agency, KARAMAH promotes judicial independence and human dignity in the administration of justice through judicial education, research and directed civil society engagement.

**Haroun Bouazzi** is a member of the group Collectif de solidarité au Canada avec les luttes sociales en Tunisie and helped organize the thousands-strong rally January 14, 2011 in support of Tunisia's revolution, which overthrew five-term President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali. He is a software integrator and designer based in Montreal.

**Mazen Chouaib** is the founder and Managing Director of CLIC-Consultants, an Ottawa-based consulting firm with a particular focus on supporting international organizations and civil society working in the Middle East and Africa in areas of good governance and democratic reform. He is currently engaged in projects in Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt, where he works on issues of democratic development, anti-corruption, parliamentary reform, and the protection of minority rights. Mazen has been an associate of the Parliamentary Centre since 2004 and is a former executive director of the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations.

**David Comerford** is President of the National Council on Canada-Arab Relations and an international development project management and evaluation specialist with experience in over 20 countries. As a Middle East specialist he has visited, lived and studied in many countries in the Arab region including Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, UAE, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Much of this work has focused on initiatives in the formal and informal education and skills training sectors. He has held senior positions both overseas and in Canada with Oxfam-Quebec, El Taller International, the Canadian Bureau for International Education and CUSO. He currently works as an independent consultant and a Senior Advisor with Integrated Development Enterprise Associates.

**Dr. Nathan Funk** is an Associate Professor in Peace and Conflict Studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo. He has authored or co-authored a number of writings on international conflict resolution, with a special focus on unofficial, "track two" dialogue processes, Islamic-Western relations, identity conflict, and the role of cultural and religious factors in peacebuilding capacity development. He has lived in the Middle East and South Asia,

designed internet courses on peace and conflict resolution, and worked on research and training projects for the United States Institute of Peace. At present, he is serving as a member of the board of directors for two Canadian NGOs, Project Ploughshares and Peacebuild: The Canadian Peacebuilding Network. His publications include *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West* and *Islam and Peacemaking in the Middle East*. He earned his Ph.D. in International Relations (2000) from the American University School of International Service in Washington, DC. He also holds a B.A in Global Community Studies from Gustavus Adolphus College.

**Adel Iskandar** is a scholar of Arab studies at the Center for Contemporary Arab Studies and the Communication, Culture and Technology program at Georgetown University, Washington, DC His research focuses on media and communication and he is the author and coauthor of several works including *Al-Jazeera: The Story of the Network that is Rattling Governments and Redefining Modern Journalism* (Basic Books), the first book on the network. Professor Iskandar's work deals with media, identity and politics and he has lectured extensively on these topics at universities in over 20 countries. His two forthcoming books are on the role of new media and dissidence in the Arab world. Iskandar is the executive director of a newly established media development NGO -- Voices Without Borders International.

**Grant Kippen** has spent the past 30 years involved in electoral politics and democracy strengthening activities. Internationally, Grant has worked in Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan (in support of the 2005 Iraq elections), Kyrgyz Republic, Timor Leste Kosovo, Moldova, Nepal, Pakistan, Sudan and Ukraine. During this time he has been employed by the United Nations, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the National Democratic Institute, International Organization of Migration, Elections Canada and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs. He was the Chairman of the Electoral Complaints Commission in Afghanistan for the 2009 Presidential and Provincial Council elections and the 2005 Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections He has written a number of articles on such issues as e-democracy, electoral financing within post-conflict countries, the impact of information technology on electoral campaigns as well as on elections and democracy in Afghanistan. He is Principal of the Hillbrooke Group and a Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Democracy, School of Policy Studies, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada.

**Mokhtar Lamani** is a distinguished international diplomat of Moroccan origin. He has served as ambassador to Iraq for the League of Arab States, held several other positions with the General Secretariat of the League (1980–97 / 2006–2007) and was the Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations. He has led mediation efforts between Iraq and Kuwait, on prisoner of war exchange issues and acted as coordinator in Arab-African and Arab-European dialogue processes.

**Samuel Rizk** is currently the Peace and Development Advisor to the United Nations Development Programme in Sudan. From September 2009 to April 2010 he served as Conflict Prevention Advisor with UNDP Yemen. In the early 2000s, Samuel was a founding member and executive director of the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue, a regional NGO based in Beirut working on conflict resolution initiatives, community empowerment and interfaith

relations in the Arab world. During that time he helped establish and lead the Arab Partnership for Conflict Prevention and Human Security and coordinated its work with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. Previous experience includes work with the Middle East Council of Churches in Egypt and Lebanon on issues of justice, peace and human rights, as well as with the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Development Studies in Cairo as editor in chief of the English-language newsletter *Civil Society and Democratization in the Arab World*.

## **Moderators**

**Peter Jones** is an Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa. Prior to joining the school in 2005, he worked as a senior analyst for the Security and Intelligence Secretariat of the Privy Council of Canada and previously held various positions related to international affairs and security at the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Privy Council Office, and the Department of Defence. A renowned expert on security in the Middle East and a practitioner of track-two diplomacy, he is a fellow at several research institutions, including the Center for Trans-Atlantic Relations at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University and at The Regional Centre for Conflict Prevention of the Jordan Institute for Diplomacy in Amman, Jordan. He holds a PhD in War Studies from Kings' College, London, and an MA in War Studies from the Royal Military College of Canada.

**Ann Weston** is Director of the Special Initiatives Division at the International Development Research Centre. An economist by training, she is an expert on issues of trade and poverty and has worked all over the developing world. She is widely published and has a wealth of experience in research, training, evaluation, and management. At IDRC, she oversees the Canadian Partnerships Program, which facilitates Canadian participation in international research networks, and the Fellowships and Awards program, which provides financial support to scholars in Canada and in developing countries. She has worked at the UK's Overseas Development Institute, the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, the North-South Institute and has had a long association with the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development. Ann holds an MSc in economics from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

**Marc Lemieux** has been working in governance program management and policy implementation, foreign election support and on initiatives related to federalism, since participating in the UN mission in Cambodia in 1993. He served in Iraq as Regional Coordinator with the International Foundation for Election Systems (2004-2005) and was subsequently Director of the Iraq federalism and then Pakistan federalism programs at the Forum of Federations (2006-2010). During 2009, he evaluated the five-year Middle East Good Governance Fund sponsored by CIDA and IDRC. He has authored articles and book chapters examining elections and democratic consolidation in Iraq and during 2008 and 2009, he was a Visiting Professor at the University of Ottawa, the Master's seminar on Democracy Promotion at the School of Public and International Affairs. Marc holds a Master's in international relations from McGill University.

**Razmik Panossian** is the former Director of Policy, Programmes and Planning at Rights & Democracy, where he managed the international programming of the institution. Prior to his return to Canada from the UK in 2003, he taught courses on nationalism and ethnic conflict, post-Soviet transition/democratization, and comparative politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and at the School of Oriental and African Studies. He obtained his BA from McGill (Montreal), MA from York (Toronto), and PhD from London School of Economics (with a thesis that won the Lord Bryce Prize for Best Dissertation in Comparative and International Politics in the UK). His book, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, was published in 2006 by Columbia University Press/Hurst & Co. He published a co-edited a book of policy papers entitled *Governing Diversity: Democratic Solutions in Multicultural Societies* (2007).