



Biographies of Guest Speakers

Key-Note Speaker



Dr Taher Kanaan (Jordan)

Dr Kanaan has a distinguished international career. After gaining his PhD in Economics from Cambridge University's Trinity College in 1964, his professional career is marked by experience in Government, United Nations, and regional organizations.

Dr. Kanaan is CEO of the Jordan Centre for Public Policy Research and Dialogue (JCPP). The JCPP, established in 2003, is an independent, non-profit think tank focusing on issues critical to the development process in Jordan.

Dr Kanaan was previously a consultant to the World Bank on development finance and housing policy in Palestine, and has held senior executive positions in UNCTAD, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, and the Industrial Development Bank of Jordan. Dr Kanaan's civil service career has included being Jordan's Governor on the Board of Governors for the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (1986-1989), and the World Bank (1986-1989). He was also Minister of Planning during these same years, Minister of State for Development Affairs and Head of the Cabinet Economic Team from 1989 to 1999, and from 1986-2004 has been closely engaged in the Board of Higher Education.

Dr Kanaan has engaged in voluntary civil society activities including currently serving on the Boards of Trustees of the Economic Research Forum of the Arab Countries, Iran and Turkey (ERF), the Center for Arab Unity Studies, the Institute of Palestine Studies, and the Arab Anti-Corruption Organization.

He has written widely on economic development in the region, including economic input-output modelling for Iraq, projections of capital needs and the trade gap for Jordan and Iraq and multi-sectoral projections for the Moroccan economy.

His recent publications include: a chapter entitled, Financing Higher Education in Jordan, in Higher Education Financing in Arab Countries, edited by Ahmed Galal and Taher Kanaan in 2010; a chapter co-authored by Joseph Masaad titled, Jordan: Propellers of Autocracy in Ibrahim Elbadawi and Samir Makdisi's Democracy in the Arab World, 2011; and, in 2009, he and May Hanania co-wrote The Disconnect between Education, Job Growth, and Employment in Jordan, by Taher Kanaan and May Hanania in "Generation in Waiting, the Unfulfilled Promise of Young People In the Middle East" edited by Navtej Dhillon and Tarik Yousef, and published by the Brookings Institution.

Panel Guest Speakers



Mr Abid Briki (Tunisia)

Mr Briki has held the position of Deputy General Secretary of the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) since 1994. In this capacity, he was at the forefront of Tunisia's 2011 revolution, as the Spokesperson for the Labour Union, an organization with over 500,000 members as of 2010.

During his role in the UGTT, he was in charge of private sector and legislation (1994-1998), education (1998-2000), and trade union vocational training and education of the low-skilled labor force (2000 until present).

As Tunisia's main trade union, the UGTT played a critical role in the demise of the former regime, and maintain a central role in holding the present government to account for the demands of the Tunisian people, including the reform of the economy, government-al processes, human rights, and disadvantaged people.

Beyond his home country, Mr Briki has shared his experience with other countries in the region, and participated in the creation of unions in both Bahrain and Oman.

Mr Ezz-Adeen Saeed Ahmed Al-Asbahi (Yemen)

Mr Al-Asbahi is the president of Human Rights Information & Training Center (HRITC), a non-governmental organization which seeks to enhance human rights in Yemen and the Arab World, focusing on the Gulf States in particular. HRITC has consultative status with the United Nations, offers training courses and forums on human rights, publishes a quarterly human rights magazine called "Our Rights", and has published 30 books on law and human rights.

Mr Al-Asbahi is also the coordinator of a large regional network of human rights activists in the Gulf States and the Peninsula, and the president of a Yemeni network of human rights organizations which includes six Yemeni NGOs. A journalist and researcher, he has published eight books on literature and human rights. He is also the head of the civil society sector of the Supreme National Authority to Combat Corruption.

<http://www.hritc.info/en/index.php>



Mr Abdel Rahman Gad Hassan (Egypt) :

Is an MSc Candidate in Political Science, Cairo University's Faculty of Economics and Political Science. He works as a Researcher at the Centre for social, judicial and economic documentation and study CEDEJ <http://www.cedej-eg.org> at the Social and Political Survey Division more specifically. His working area fits into the following: social inclusion, development policies, Islamic philosophy, Islamic groups and organizations, and he is currently focusing on Upper Egypt.

Prior to the revolution, he used to work for the Namaa Initiative for Sustainable Development NAMA.INFO, more specifically in the field of civil education and local development.