

# Qatar Mediation Forum

9 December 2024

# Panelists





**Mr. Alessandro Accorsi, Senior Analyst, Technology and Conflict, International Crisis Group**

Mr. Alessandro Accorsi has served as Senior Analyst for Social Media and Conflict at the International Crisis Group since September 2022. Before joining the Crisis Group, Mr. Accorsi led the Southern Task Force at the European Union External Action Service for five years, where he specialized in managing foreign interference and strategic communications in the Middle East. Between 2010 and 2015, Mr. Accorsi worked as a field researcher and foreign correspondent in the Middle East, covering post-revolutionary Egypt, as well as Israel and Palestine. He later transitioned to investigative journalism, specializing in open-source intelligence (OSINT) from 2015 to 2017. Mr. Accorsi holds a Master's Degree in International and Diplomatic Studies from the University of Bologna and a Master's Degree in Investigative Journalism from City University of London.

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**Mr. Asif Khan, Director, Policy and Mediation Division, UN Department of Political & Peacebuilding Affairs**

Mr. Asif R. Khan is currently the Director of the Policy and Mediation Division at the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. His role involves leading initiatives that address the intersections of climate change, peace, and security, contributing significantly to the UN's efforts in these areas. His professional journey includes substantial contributions to the development of strategies for climate-related peace and security risks. Prior to his current role, Asif served as Chief of Mediation Support and Gender Peace & Security from April 2017 to June 2022, where he led the support for mediation efforts that addressed gender dynamics in conflict situations. His career at the UN also includes earlier positions focusing on political peacekeeping, humanitarian, and human rights issues. Asif holds a Master of International Affairs from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and a Bachelor of Arts from Columbia College.

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**Mr. Dan Smith, Director, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute**

Mr. Smith is the Director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). He has researched and written on security, conflict and peace for four decades. He served four years in the UN Peacebuilding Fund Advisory Group and was part-time Professor of Peace and Conflict at the University of Manchester from 2014 to 2017. Before taking up his post at SIPRI, he was Secretary General of the London-based peacebuilding NGO International Alert and Director of the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo. His most recent book is the 10th edition of *The State of the World Atlas* (2020). Mr. Smith's subject expertise covers a broad spectrum of conflict and peace issues, including nationalism, identity politics, armed conflicts, the ethics of intervention, and the gender aspects of conflict and peacebuilding.

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**Dr. Esra Çuhadar, Head of Research at the Ottawa Dialogue, Associate Senior Fellow, Inclusive Peace**

Dr. Esra Çuhadar is a Professor at the Department of Political Science at Bilkent University, Ankara, Türkiye, and the Head of Research at Ottawa Dialogue. She is an Associate Senior Fellow at Inclusive Peace and a Senior Expert for dialogue and peace processes at the United States Institute of Peace. Previously, she was Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, and Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. She also formerly worked at Sabanci University in Istanbul. Dr. Çuhadar has conducted numerous trainings and consultations in negotiation and mediation processes for various groups and organizations around the world. She has been working as a regional mediator for the World Bank in Turkey and the Caucasus since 2011 and in the mediation roster of the OSCE since 2015. She is a core member of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network Turkey antenna since 2019. She received her M.A., PhD, and an advanced graduate certificate in applied conflict resolution from Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University.

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**Dr. Evelyne Tauchnitz, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Social Ethics, University of Lucerne**

Dr. Evelyne Tauchnitz is a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Social Ethics at the University of Lucerne and a Research Associate at the University of Oxford's Centre for Technology and Global Affairs (CTGA). She focuses on governance strategies for peace in the digital age, and also serves on the UN Internet Governance Forum's Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group. Dr. Tauchnitz holds a PhD in International Relations from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva and was a Visiting Fellow at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, where she researched international norms and negotiation. Previously, she led a multi-year Swiss National Science Foundation project at the University of Bern, examining the intersection of political science and human rights law. Her career includes roles with Swiss Parliamentary Services, UNICEF, and civil society organizations. She studied political science, economics, and law at the University of Bern.

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**Ms. Hind About Kabawat, President, Tastakel organization**

Ms. Hind About Kabawat is the President of Tastakel, a women's center promoting non-violence and dialogue in Syria. She is also the Director of Interfaith Peacebuilding at George Mason University's Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution, and Deputy Head of the Syrian Negotiation Commission's Geneva Office. Her career encompasses roles in law, peacebuilding, and academia, particularly focusing on conflict resolution and civil society development. Ms. Kabawat has directed George Mason University's Syria program since 2004, educating students on conflict intervention through seminars and fieldwork. Recognized for her contributions to peace and interfaith dialogue, Ms. Kabawat has received several awards, including the Peacemakers in Action Award from the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding. Her work has positioned her as a key figure in global discussions on Middle Eastern peace processes and women's empowerment in conflict zones.

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**Mr. Jonathan Cohen, Executive Director, Conciliation Resources**

Mr. Cohen was appointed Executive Director of Conciliation Resources in May 2016. He joined Conciliation Resources in 1997 and developed the Caucasus program focusing on dialogue and confidence building initiatives to promote peacebuilding in the Caucasus. In September 2008 he became Director of Programmes overseeing Conciliation Resources' regional programs in the Caucasus, Colombia, West Africa, East and Central Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Philippines, Fiji and India/Pakistan in relation to Kashmir. In 2018 Jonathan became Chair of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO). Jonathan has taught peace and conflict studies at the London School of Economics and broadcast on radio and television about the Caucasus.

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**Dr. Khalid Al-Khulaifi, Office of the Special Envoy to the Foreign Minister, Qatar**

Dr. Khalid Al-Khulaifi is a diplomat and academic specializing in international relations, with a focus on small states studies and state power dynamics. Over the past decade, he has held various roles in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar. He also serves as a senior expert at the Centre for International Policy Research (CIPR), drawing on both his professional and academic experience to engage with global political issues. Dr. Al-Khulaifi earned his PhD in International Relations and Political Science from the Australian National University, with research on the strategic role of small states and the use of smart power. He has also lectured at Qatar University, where he developed and taught courses on International Relations, Gulf Studies, Security and International Law. In addition to teaching, he has participated in international conferences and forums, sharing his work on subjects related to his field. His combination of diplomatic practice and academic work offers insights into the dynamics of global politics and the behavior of small states.

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**H.E. Dr. Majed bin Mohammad Al Ansari, Advisor to the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Dr. Al Ansari is the official spokesperson for the Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Advisor to the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He holds a PhD and Master's degree in Social Change from the University of Manchester, and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Leeds. As the primary media face of Qatar's foreign affairs, he consistently provides strategic analyses and insights for both local and international audiences. Additionally, he heads the Qatar International Policy Research Center, focusing on geopolitical trends and North-South relations. Previously, he served as Director of Policy at the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute at Qatar University and led the Qatar International Academy for Security Studies.

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**Ms. Megan Grazier, Associate, Build Up**

Ms. Megan Grazier is a former Director of Project Operations at Busara, where her work involved streamlining processes for accessible knowledge sharing, enhancing collaboration across teams, and improving project kickoff practices. With extensive experience in peacebuilding and development, Ms. Grazier previously managed programs for international organizations across the Middle East and Africa. At Interpeace, she led a multi-year initiative in Somalia and Somaliland, collaborating with local partners, engaging with donors, and strengthening stakeholder relationships. Before moving to East Africa, she worked with ACTED in Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine, managing civil society and empowerment programs focused on youth and women's engagement.

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**Ms. Meredith Preston McGhie, Secretary General, Global Centre for Pluralism**

Ms. Preston McGhie is the Secretary General for the Global Centre for Pluralism. Prior to joining the Centre in October 2019, she devoted more than 20 years to addressing conflict and instability in Africa and Asia. From working with the Naga in Northeast India and indigenous communities on the Thai-Myanmar border, to supporting UN efforts in Kosovo, Northern Iraq and several African countries, her work has straddled frontline negotiation, policy and diplomacy. As Africa Regional Director with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, she oversaw the HD Centre’s complex mediation and dialogue efforts in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sudan, Somalia and South Sudan, among other places. In the Kenyan National Dialogue and Reconciliation Process in 2007-08, she advised the Panel of Eminent African Personalities led by the late Kofi Annan, former Director of the Board of the Global Centre for Pluralism. She has held positions with the United Nations in Sudan and South Sudan and worked across the region on conflict resolution and humanitarian response efforts.

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**Mrs. Nofe Khalid Al-Suwaidi, Acting Director of International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar**

Ms. Nofe Khalifa Al-Suwaidi is the Acting Director of the International Cooperation Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar. She holds a Master’s Degree in Law from Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration from Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMUQ). She began her career at Qatar Foundation (QF) before moving to Msheireb Properties, where she served as a compliance and business process improvement specialist. She also served as the President of the Law Society at Hamad Bin Khalifa University. She has represented Qatar in numerous international forums, including a special session on the sidelines of the conference on Ukraine’s peace formula in Montreal, Canada, where she highlighted Qatar’s mediation efforts and humanitarian cooperation. She also participated in discussions with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

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**Dr. Sara Hellmüller, Senior Researcher at the Center for Security Studies**

Dr. Sara Hellmüller is a Senior Researcher at the Center for Security Studies (CSS), leading a five-year SNSF PRIMA project examining the effects of global political shifts on UN peace missions. She spearheaded the creation of the UN Peace Mission Mandates dataset (UNPMM) and is co-investigator on a project documenting Switzerland’s inaugural UN Security Council term. Additionally, Dr. Hellmüller organizes a touring exhibition on UN peace missions, funded by an SNSF Agora grant. Her research focuses on UN peace missions, peace processes, and norms in peace promotion, with field experience in Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo). Previously, she held research and teaching roles at the Geneva Graduate Institute, swisspeace, and Oxford University.

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### **Mr. Shamil Idriss, Chief Executive Officer, Search for Common Ground**

Mr. Shamil Idriss is the CEO of Search for Common Ground where he leads efforts to resolve violent conflicts across more than 35 countries, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. With a long-standing career in international conflict resolution. Before joining Search, he co-founded Soliya, pioneering virtual exchanges for cross-cultural collaboration, which helped inspire initiatives like the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative. He holds degrees in Economics and Philosophy from Swarthmore College and is an active speaker on peacebuilding, including the Ambassador Chris Stevens Memorial Lecture Series and the Global Philanthropy Conference..

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### **Professor Tarek Mitri, Former Special Representative of the UN Secretary General**

Dr. Tarek Mitri is the President of Saint George University of Beirut, a role he has held since 2018. Previously, he served as the United Nations Special Representative to Libya (2012-2014) and held ministerial positions in four Lebanese government, overseeing portfolios in Environment, Administrative Reform, Culture, Information, and briefly as Acting Foreign Minister. Dr. Mitri's academic contributions include teaching positions at University Saint Joseph, the University of Balamand, and Harvard University. He also directed the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut from 2014 to 2019. Dr. Mitri, an authority on Arab politics and religion, has authored key texts, including Religion, Law, and Society. He chairs the boards of the Institute for Palestine Studies and the Nicolas Ibrahim Surssock Museum. He holds a BA in Chemistry, an MA in Philosophy, and a PhD in Political Studies.

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### **Dr. Vasu Gounden, Executive Director, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes**

Dr. Vasu Gounden is the Executive Director of ACCORD, Africa's largest conflict resolution organization, which he founded in 1992. With over 30 years of experience in peace and security, he is a lawyer and mediator whose expertise has shaped numerous peace initiatives across Africa, including in Somalia, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. He earned his LL.B. from the University of Durban-Westville, where he was active in student leadership, and an LL.M. from Georgetown University, specializing in international negotiations. Dr. Gounden has worked with global leaders like Nelson Mandela and advised the South African government, UN, and international organizations on peacebuilding efforts. He serves on several boards, including the Gandhi Development Trust and Global Peace Index Expert Panel, and was named a World Economic Forum Global Leader for Tomorrow. In 2016, he received an honorary Doctorate of Social Sciences from the University of KwaZulu-Natal for his contributions to peace and security.

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**Ms. Yun Sun, Director of the Stimson Center China Program**

Ms. Yun Sun is a Senior Fellow and Co-Director of the East Asia Program and Director of the China Program at the Stimson Center. Her expertise is in Chinese foreign policy, U.S.-China relations and China's relations with neighboring countries and authoritarian regimes. From 2011 to early 2014, she was a Visiting Fellow at the Brookings Institution, jointly appointed by the Foreign Policy Program and the Global Development Program, where she focused on Chinese national security decision-making processes and China-Africa relations. From 2008 to 2011, Ms. Sun was the China Analyst for the International Crisis Group based in Beijing, specializing on China's foreign policy towards conflict countries and the developing world. Prior to ICG, she worked on U.S.-Asia relations in Washington, DC for five years. She earned her master's degree in international policy and practice from George Washington University, as well as an MA in Asia Pacific studies and a BA in international relations from Foreign Affairs College in Beijing..

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**Dr. Najat Rochdi, United Nations Deputy Special Envoy for Syria**

Dr. Rochdi brings over 20 years of experience in political affairs and international coordination in conflict and post-conflict areas. Previous assignments include Deputy Special Coordinator and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator with the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Senior Adviser to the Special Envoy for Syria, and Director of Peer to Peer with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Geneva. Earlier, she served as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator with the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Cameroon, and Deputy Director of the Representative Office of the United Nations Development Programme in Geneva. Dr. Rochdi holds a doctorate in information systems from the National Institute of Statistics and of Applied Economics in Rabat and a Master's degree in Mathematics and Fundamental Applications from the University of Paris Sud 11.

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# Moderators



**Ms. Anna Hess, Senior Peace and Security Advisor**

Ms. Anna Hesse is a peace and security expert with extensive experience in conflict studies and peace mediation. Over the course of her career, she has designed and supported a number of formal and informal peace processes in Eurasia and South Asia. Ms. Hess has also developed and led educational programs in the field of peace and conflict studies, varying from certificate courses to a full-fledged master's degree program. In her most recent capacity as Head of Conflict Resolution at the Austrian Center for Peace, she led the team's work in dialogue and mediation processes across the Middle East, Africa and Eurasia.

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**Ms. Christina Buchhold, Manager, Mediation Support and Policy Unit, Oslo Forum**

Ms. Christina Buchhold manages the Oslo Forum at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) and is the executive editor of The Mediator's Studio podcast series. The retreat is co-hosted by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and HD, a private diplomacy organization based in Switzerland. Prior to joining HD in 2015, she was a project analyst for the European Union's Arms Trade Treaty outreach program at the German Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control.

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**Mr. Hafed Al Ghwell, Senior Fellow and Executive Director, North Africa Initiative at SAIS Foreign Policy Institute**

Mr. Hafed Al Ghwell is a non-resident fellow at the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies (CHS). He is a senior fellow and executive director of the North Africa Initiative at the SAIS Foreign Policy Institute. Prior to his current role at the Foreign Policy Institute, he has had a long, notable career serving in multiple distinct roles as a consultant, advisor, fellow, and scholar in world-renowned think tanks. At the Atlantic Council, Oxford Analytica, Maxwell Stamp Inc., and Foreign Reports, he specialized in the political economies of the Middle East and North Africa countries, government affairs, international relations, geopolitics, and geostrategic risks.

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**Mr. Mouin Rabbani, Non-resident fellow, Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies**

Is a non-resident fellow at the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies (CHS). He is a researcher, analyst, and commentator specializing in Palestinian affairs, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the contemporary Middle East. He has previously served as Principal Political Affairs Officer with the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Head of Middle East with Crisis Management Initiative/Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, and Senior Middle East Analyst and Special Advisor on Israel-Palestine with the International Crisis Group. He is co-editor of Jadaliyya and contributing editor of Middle East Report.

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**Dr. Randa Slim**

Dr. Randa Slim is director of the Conflict Resolution and Track II Dialogues Program at the Middle East Institute and a non-resident fellow at Johns Hopkins University. She has held senior positions at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, U.S. Institute of Peace, and Resolve, Inc. With extensive experience in peacebuilding and Track II dialogues in the Middle East and Central Asia, she has authored studies and articles on conflict management and post-conflict peacebuilding. She holds master's degree from the American University of Beirut.

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