

PROGRAMME

Reframing Iraq: Power, Politics, and Paths to Inclusion

PeaceRep Iraq Final Conference

Saturday 14 February 2026

The Marshal Building, LSE

09:00	Registration and Coffee The Marshal Building
09:30 – 10:00	Opening Plenary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome from LSE Middle East Centre Director — Dr. Katerina Dalacoura The Programme Coordinator for PeaceRep Iraq — Mr. Mustafa Al-Soufi
10:00 – 11:15	Power, Persistence, and Political Transformation <p>A key research theme within PeaceRep Iraq has been the focus on institutional continuity in Iraq's post-2003 political order. The <i>mubasasa</i> system has demonstrated durability alongside recurring protest movements and generational shifts. Papers examine how elite dynamics, opposition party strategies, and intra-sectarian competition interact with Iraq's political settlement. The session explores questions including: What factors contribute to <i>mubasasa</i>'s continuity despite public criticism? What pathways exist for opposition parties to influence the system? How do elite incentives shape governance outcomes?</p> <p>Chair: Mr. Ali Al-Mawlawi, an independent analyst and researcher</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms. Simona Foltyn, journalist and filmmaker Dr. Zmkan Ali Saleem, Lecture at the University of Sulaimani Dr. Juline Beaujouan-Marliere, Senior Research Fellow with the Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep) Dr. Kamaran Palani, Principal Investigator of the PeaceRep Iraq at LSE Middle East Centre
11:15 – 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 – 12:45	Systems Under Strain - Resources, Education, and Humanitarian Transitions <p>This session examines foundational systems that both reflect and shape Iraq's political and social landscape. Papers explore transformations in education, water resource management, the experiences of ethno-religious minorities, and the UN's shift from humanitarian assistance to development funding—examining how resource allocation and institutional changes affect possibilities for reform and human development.</p> <p>Chair: Dr. Mohammedali Taha, Director of the Media and Communication Unit at the KRG Prime Minister's Office</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Michael Mason, Professor of Environmental Geography in the Department of Geography and Environment, LSE Dr. Arda Bilgen, Research Officer at LSE Middle East Centre Dr. Kelsey Shanks, Professor of Education Ulster University and UNESCO Chair

- Ms. Alannah Travers, a legal researcher and PhD candidate at Queen's University Belfast

12:45 – 13:45

Lunch

13:45 – 15:00

Iraq in Regional Politics

This session situates Iraq within the shifting dynamics of Middle Eastern regional politics. It examines how neighbouring powers and broader geopolitical rivalries shape Iraq's sovereignty, security, and foreign policy choices. Contributions explore Iraq's relations with Iran, Turkey, and Gulf states, the impact of regional competition on domestic governance, and Baghdad's attempts to navigate an increasingly fragmented regional order.

Chair: Sir John Jenkins, a former British Ambassador to Baghdad and an Associate Fellow of Chatham House

Speakers:

- Dr. Sanam Vakil, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Chatham House
- Mr. Galip Dalay, Co-Director of Programme on Global Orders at Oxford University
- Dr. Ranj Alaaldin, Director of the Middle East Peace & Security Forum

15:00 – 16:00

Bridging Research and Policy for Inclusive Peacebuilding in Iraq

This closing session examines how evidence-informed research can support effective policy design and delivery for inclusive peacebuilding and governance reform in Iraq. Bringing together government and political actors, the discussion draws on PeaceRep's research to assess progress towards inclusive peace more than two decades after regime change, and how evidence can help close gaps between policy intent and implementation. Panellists will explore how research-policy partnerships can be strengthened to improve decision-making and long-term impact, and where future research should prioritise to support inclusive, accountable, and resilient governance in Iraq.

Chair: Khogir Wirya, Senior Research at Middle East Research Institute

Speakers:

- Dr. Mohammad Al-Shumary, Ambassador in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq
- Mr. Karwan Jamal, Kurdistan Regional Government Representative to the UK
- FCDO Iraq representative

16:00 – 16:05

Closing Remarks by Dr. Kamaran Palani, LSE Middle East Centre

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Speakers' Biographies

Alannah Travers is a PhD student at Queen's University Belfast School of Law, in collaboration with the Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, researching Algorithmic Warfare and Civilian Harm. She was previously based in Iraq, working with the Coalition for Just Reparations (C4JR) on the implementation of Iraq's 2021 Yazidi Survivors' Law and the closure of UNITAD.

Ali Al-Mawlawi is a policy consultant specialising in Iraq's political economy. He is director of the London-based Horizon Advisory Group, providing research and analysis on governance reform to diplomatic missions and international organisations operating in Iraq.

Dr. Arda Bilgen is a Research Officer at the LSE Middle East Centre, where he co-leads the Kuwait Programme project on Water Security and previously worked on the PeaceRep project examining surface water changes in the Euphrates-Tigris Basin.

Galip Dalay is Senior Consulting Fellow at Chatham House, and Co-Director, Programme on Global Orders at Oxford University. His work focuses on Turkey, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, Russian foreign policy, middle powers in a changing global order, the history and politics of Turkey-West and of Turkey-Russia relations, and the history and politics of post-imperial and post-colonial forms of internationalism.

Sir John Jenkins is an Associate Fellow of Chatham House. Between 1980 and 2015, he served as a British diplomat, initially in Abu Dhabi (1983-86), Malaysia (1989-92) and Kuwait (1995-98) before being appointed HM Ambassador to Burma (1999-2002). He was subsequently HM Consul-General, Jerusalem (2003-06), Ambassador to Syria (2006-07), FCO Director for the Middle East and North Africa (2007-09), Ambassador to Iraq (2009-11), Special Representative to the National Transitional Council and subsequently Ambassador to Libya (2011) and Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (2012-2015).

Dr. Juline Beaujouan is a researcher and educator with a transdisciplinary background in Peace and Conflict Studies, and a strong commitment to collaborative and responsible research practices. She currently serves as a Senior Research Fellow with the Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep), based at the University of Edinburgh.

Dr. Kamaran Palani is the Principal Investigator of the PeaceRep Iraq programme at the LSE Middle East Centre. Kamaran also conducts research on the drivers of conflict and state fragmentation in Iraq. Kamaran has published his research in several international journals, including *Nations and Nationalism*; *Territory, Politics, Governance*; *International Peacekeeping*, *Third World Quarterly*; *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*.

Mr Karwan Jamal Tahir is the High Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government to the United Kingdom, a position he has held since June 2015. As part of the KRG, he also served in various senior roles including Senior Adviser to the Minister of Natural Resources and Deputy Minister of the Department of Foreign Relations. As High Representative, he is mandated to strengthen bilateral relations between the Kurdistan Region and the UK's government, think tanks, NGOs, educational institutions, and cultural and trade organizations.

Dr Katerina Dalacoura is Associate Professor in International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Director of the LSE Middle East Centre. She held a Major Research Fellowship by the Leverhulme Trust between 2021 and 2024. The project findings will shortly be published as a book monograph by Cambridge University Press, under the title *Islamic International Thought in Turkey: History, Civilisation and Nation*. Dr Dalacoura's work has centered on the intersection of Islamism and international human rights norms.

Professor Kelsey Shanks holds the UNESCO Chair in Education for Peacebuilding and Human Rights and is a leading expert on the politics of education in conflict. Her work focuses primarily on Iraq, with additional research in Ukraine, Syria and Somalia. She has advised UN agencies, governments and

INGOs. Kelsey holds a British Academy Bilateral Chair and leads AHRC- and BA-funded projects. She has published extensively, including the book *Education and Ethno-Politics*.

Khogir Wirya is a senior researcher at the Middle East Research Institute (MERI). His research focuses on political dynamics across Iraq, with a particular emphasis on the disputed territories. He also studies the interplay between armed groups and state institutions, exploring how power structures shape governance, policy implementation, and security provision in these contexts within Iraq.

Professor Michael Mason is Professor of Environmental Geography at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where he also served as Director of the Middle East Centre from 2018-2025. His research addresses global environmental politics and regional environmental change in the Middle East.

Dr. Mohammed Shummary is the newly appointed Ambassador in the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He previously served as Professor of Foreign Affairs at Al-Nahrain University's College of Political Science. He has been a Senior Advisor to Sayyid Ammar Al-Hakim, and led foreign relations efforts for the Hikma National Movement (2017–2022) after managing the electoral campaign of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (2012–2017). Dr. Shummary holds a PhD, MA, and BA in Political strategic Science, and is based in Baghdad, Iraq.

Dr. Mohammedali Taha is a politician, academic, poet, and media strategist. He currently serves as Advisor to the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Director of the Media and Communication Unit at the Prime Minister's Office. He previously served as a Member of the Kurdistan Parliament during its fourth term (2013-2018). He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Lisbon and is the author of *Media and Politics in Kurdistan: How Politics and Media Are Locked in an Embrace*.

Mustafa Al-Soufi is a Programme Coordinator at the LSE Middle East Centre, where he oversees Iraq-focused research programmes including PeaceRep Iraq, a five-year initiative examining peacebuilding and state-society relations in post-conflict Iraq.

Dr. Ranj Alaaldin is the Director of the Middle East Peace & Security Forum and a foreign policy specialist with over 20 years of experience in international security, security sector reform, hybrid warfare, and track II diplomacy. He holds a PhD from the London School of Economics and has held numerous positions including at Columbia University, the Brookings Institution, Oxford University, and the World Bank.

Dr Sanam Vakil is the director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Chatham House. Her expertise spans Iranian and Gulf politics, regional security dynamics, and US foreign policy, with a particular focus on the evolving strategic landscape of the Middle East and its global connectivity.

Simona Foltyn is an independent journalist and documentary filmmaker with more than a decade of on-the-ground reporting from conflict-affected regions across the Middle East and Africa.

Dr. Zmkan Ali Saleem is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Sulaimani, Iraq, and a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Regional and International Studies (IRIS), a think tank based at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS).