

MESF & AIIA Panel Discussion: Australia's Relations with the Middle East

Prof Sally Totman, Mr Roland Jabbour OAM, Dr Rodger Shanahan,
Mr James Bryan

Thursday 7 September 2023: 4:15pm for 4:30pm - 6pm AEST | Deakin Downtown, Tower 2, Level 12, 727 Collins Street, Melbourne, VIC 3008

Please join us on Thursday 7 September, as part of [Social Sciences Week](#), for a co-hosted [MESF](#) and [AIIA](#) panel discussion on Australia's Relations with the Middle East.

Social Sciences Week is an annual event that celebrates and showcases the diverse range of social sciences disciplines and research in Australia. The social sciences are key to understanding humanity, society and the institutions which govern our daily lives.

Middle East Studies Forum (MESF) at Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation (ADI) and the Australian Institute of International Affairs -Vic (AIIA) are delighted to host this discussion panel.

Australia has viewed the Middle East as a region of great cultural, economic, and geopolitical importance. With the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan in 2021, Australia concluded two decades of military operations in the Middle East. Yet the region remains important for global peace and security. Concerted efforts by China and Russia to enhance their presence and influence in the Middle East only points to the continued geo-political importance of the region in years to come. Furthermore, increased migration from the region has enriched the social and cultural tapestry of Australian society. Arabic is the third most spoken language in Australia. Trade with the region, particularly with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries continues to grow. The combination of these factors call for an exploration of how the region's complex and dynamic landscape affect Australia's interests and how best our policy making can take advantage of opportunities and mitigate risks.

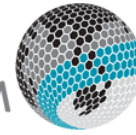


(Speaker bios overleaf)

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[This is a Free Event.](#)



Panel

Professor Sally Totman PhD is a political scientist specialising in the Middle East and North Africa and is currently the Head of School of the School of Social Work and Arts at Charles Sturt University. Previously Professor Totman has held positions at Deakin University in Melbourne, Macquarie University in Sydney, and Champlain College in Vermont.

Mr Roland Jabbour OAM is a distinguished leader in public service and business entrepreneurship with extensive experience of commerce and international trade relations. He is the Chairman of Jabbour Holding Group of companies, with its corporate headquarters based in Melbourne-Australia and offices across the Middle East region and globally. He has held numerous community positions and government appointments. Former president and national chairman, he is currently a Director, of the National Board of the Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AACCI) as well as the Honorary consul of the Kingdom of Morocco in the state of Victoria.

He is the founding and current Chairman of the Australian Arabic Council (AAC); founding director of the Australia Lebanon Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ALCCI); and founding and current director of the Australia Oman Business Council (AOBC). He served as vice president and board member of the Council for Australian Arab Relations (CAAR) under the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for his service to the Australian community. Mar Jabbour is the recipient of the Medal for the Centenary of Federation of Australia.

Dr Rodger Shanahan is a former army officer, with operational service with the UN in South Lebanon and Syria, with the Parachute Battalion Group in East Timor, in Beirut during the 2006 war, and in Afghanistan. He was the former director of the Army's Land Warfare Studies Centre and has also been posted to the Australian Embassies in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. Dr Shanahan has MAs in International Relations and Middle East Studies from the ANU, and a PhD in Arab and Islamic Studies from the University of Sydney. He has been an Associate Professor at ANU's National Security College and a Research Fellow at the Lowy Institute's West Asia program where his work focused on Australia's interests in the Middle East.

He is also a member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and an Assistant Inspector-General Australian Defence Force as an army reservist. He has written numerous journal, media and policy articles, is a frequent commentator on Middle East issues for Australian and international media, has appeared as an expert witness in dozens of terrorism trials in Australia and is the author of *Clans, Parties and Clerics: the Shi'a of Lebanon* and *an army Islamic State in Australia*.

Mr James Bryan is an officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and is currently Director of the Levant Section in the Middle East and Africa Division. Prior to that he served as the Political and Economic Counsellor at the Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Earlier roles were in the US and Indo-Pacific Strategy Division, where he focused on implementation of Australia's Indo-Pacific agenda, and the Iraq and Syria Task Force, where he worked on Syria policy and supporting Australian engagement in the Defeat-ISIL coalition. Prior to joining DFAT, Mr Bryan was an adviser with International Division in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

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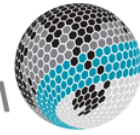
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**Australian Institute
of International Affairs**
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**MIDDLE EAST
STUDIES FORUM**



ADI
ALFRED DEAKIN INSTITUTE FOR
CITIZENSHIP AND GLOBALISATION

Hosts

Alastair Roff AIIA VIC is Executive Director of Australian Institute of International Affairs Victoria.

Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh (MESF/ADI) is Convenor of Middle East Studies Forum (MESF) at Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University.

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