A Note From DAWN’s Executive Director

Protecting and Preserving the Integrity of Our Own Democracy

In its third year of operation, DAWN has emerged as the leading organization demanding urgent reforms to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and accountability for some of the region’s worst abusers. We are so proud of the work we have accomplished this year and so grateful for the growing support for our organization, a result no doubt of our remarkable organizational output and impressive presence in global media, conferences, and convenings. As our newest Non-Resident Fellow, Josh Paul recently noted, DAWN’s work has earned the respect of the foreign policy community because of the “tremendous insights” we have brought “to the Washington policy debate, and the immense impact” we have “had on U.S. policy formulation.”

Through our research and advocacy, we have made important strides in reshaping the narrative about how people assess continued U.S. political and military support for some of the worst Middle East governments and a broadened understanding of the harms such support cause not only to the people of the region, but to U.S. national interests and the integrity of our own democracy.

Our demands for accountability have resulted in unprecedented sanctions against Israeli abusers and led to major Senate investigations about the Saudi government’s infiltration into American institutions, disrupting a proposed acquisition of PGA Tours. Even U.S. support for Israel is no longer sacrosanct, as our relentless advocacy, particularly in light of the catastrophic war in Gaza, has resulted in new guidelines to restrict arms transfers to Israel and punish violent settlers and their abettors.
Our work is now focused not only on supporting human rights and democracy in the MENA region by ending our government’s protection for abusive regimes, but on protecting and preserving the integrity of our own democracy and the rule of law.

We are campaigning to limit the nefarious foreign influence that has corrupted parts of our government and undermined decision-making in the national interest, and working to ensure the protection of civil society from pervasive extraterritorial repression targeting in particular Arab communities in our country. We remain committed to centering the voices of activists, academics, and civil society leaders from the region to share their unique understanding of the impacts of U.S. actions in the region in foreign policy deliberations through our expanding publication, Democracy in Exile.

In 2023, we also organized DAWN’s first Integrity Awards at a gala dinner commemorating the five-year anniversary of the murder of our founder, Jamal Khashoggi. We were humbled by the support of our sponsors – including the New York Times, the Washington Post, Georgetown University, Emgage Foundation, the Arab Center, Libertas Foundation, the National Interest Foundation, Grossman & Young, the Center for Egyptian-American Dialogue, and the Council on American Islamic Relations – and all our guests – over 170 leading journalists, activists, and civil society leaders in Washington D.C., who joined us in a moving tribute to Khashoggi and in our inaugural awards to MSNBC host Ayman Mohyeldin and Egyptian journalist and activist Solafa Magdy. We are excited to host our second inaugural dinner with honors befitting the legacy of our founder and his commitment to democracy and freedom for all of the people of the Middle East.

Sarah Leah Whitson
About DAWN

MISSION

METHODOLOGY

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

BOARD AND STAFF

NON-RESIDENT FELLOWS

PARTNERSHIPS
DAWN is a nonprofit organization that supports democracy and human rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Our vision is for a world where the human rights, liberty, and dignity of every person in the Middle East and North Africa are upheld by democratically elected governments, safeguarded by independent institutions and civil society organizations working under the rule of law, and supported by international governments and institutions around the world.

As a U.S.-based organization, DAWN focuses its research, analysis, and foreign policy advocacy on MENA governments with close ties to the United States and on the military, diplomatic, and economic support the U.S. government provides them, since that is where we believe we have the greatest responsibility and the greatest opportunity for influence. Our goal is to ensure that U.S. foreign policy supports the people in the MENA region by ending support for their abusive, undemocratic governments. We believe that U.S. national interests are ill-served by support for these governments and better protected by policies that foster peace, freedom, equality, and justice.

Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi founded DAWN in June 2018—just a few months before a hit squad dispatched by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman murdered him in Istanbul.

DAWN does not accept funding from any MENA government. We are currently supported solely by private foundations and individuals.

DAWN’s diverse, multi-national staff and Non-Resident Fellows have decades of relevant experience, including lawyers, journalists, scholars, activists, and advocates with roots in the MENA region and the United States. Our nine-member Board includes leading Arab- and Muslim-American activists, human rights and legal experts, and a Nobel laureate from Yemen.
Through rigorous research and analysis, relentless media outreach, targeted advocacy with policymakers, and convenings of leading human rights and foreign policy experts, DAWN challenges conventional wisdom about the MENA region and the U.S. role in it, rallies support for policies that uphold human rights and democracy, and leads the brainstorming of new solutions to long-standing regional problems.

DAWN’s advocacy for an end to U.S. support to abusive regimes is unequivocal and clearly articulated, and all of the work that we do is narrowly focused on our strategic goals. We do not cower to pressure that seeks to sideline the voices demanding reforms to U.S. policies in the region, and we establish new benchmarks to expand the space for more sensible foreign policy recommendations.

DAWN often partners with prominent institutions, organizations, and allies in the movement, taking the lead on new initiatives to reshape analysis of U.S. foreign policy in the region, co-sponsors projects and advocacy campaigns, and provides strategic support to the advocacy community to strengthen existing efforts as needed.

DAWN works to position the voices of activists and political exiles from the MENA region alongside those of regional and U.S. foreign policy experts, and to amplify those voices with policymakers and the broader foreign policy community. We believe the people most affected by abusive governance in the MENA region should have a say in the American policies that affect them.
2023 HIGHLIGHTS

JAN 9
DAWN convenes major conference in partnership with Georgetown University to propose recommendations for a just resolution of the war in Yemen, featuring Yemeni government leaders and civil society activists

MAR 1
DAWN calls for US to revoke visa of Israeli Minister Bezalel Smotrich over incitement to violence

MAR 15
The Washington Post publishes an editorial based exclusively on DAWN’s research revealing that Saudi prosecutors are seeking the death penalty against 10 former judges

MAY 10
DAWN leads the organizing for a landmark Capitol Hill event on the Palestinian Nakba.

MAY 23
DAWN’s demand for Jordanian authorities to release Former Crown Prince Hamzah results in over 41K visits to our website showing the strong interest in Jordan work

JUN 12
Five new experts on Israel-Palestine, Sudan, Iran, and Tunisia join DAWN as Non-Resident Fellows

JUL 11
In hearing, Senators ask Saudi officials DAWN-provided questions on possible PGA acquisition by Saudi Public Investment Fund

SEP 14
Biden administration withholds $85 million in conditioned military aid to Egypt following pressure by DAWN-led coalition

SEP 23
DAWN calls for US to suspend military aid to Egypt, launch investigation of Egyptian communications with Congress, after Menendez corruption indictment

OCT 2
DAWN supports Congressional Reps’ calls for passage of Khashoggi Act and Khashoggi Resolution

OCT 4
DAWN’s D.C. dinner honoring life and legacy of Jamal Khashoggi attended by over 170 guests, presents journalists Ayman Mohyeldin, Solafa Magdy with DAWN Integrity Awards

OCT 9
DAWN is first major organization to demand that U.N. call for immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, soon after echoed by hundreds of other organizations and government leaders

OCT 15
DAWN reminds Secretary of State Blinken and Secretary of Defense Austin that failure to monitor and restrict weapons to Israel could expose U.S. officials to ICC prosecution

OCT 20
DAWN calls for Arab State Governments to withdraw from Abraham Accords and end military coordination with Israel

OCT 21
DAWN’s Gaza policy recommendations to Biden administration call for ceasefire, peacekeeping forces, and international inspections

DEC 4
DAWN convenes expert roundtable to examine whether Israel’s actions in Gaza amount to genocide

DEC 20
DAWN submits to International Criminal Court information on 40 Israeli ‘Prime Suspects’
BOARD AND STAFF

BOARD

Michelle Alexander  Nihad Awad  Sahar Aziz  Louis Bickford  Reed Brody  Mongi Dhaouadi  Tawakkol Karman  Esam Omeish  Sarah Leah Whitson

STAFF

Muna Alasadi  Jamal Al Tahat  Patrick Connors  Frederick Deknatel  Wafa Hallam  Sophie Holin  Raed Jarrar  Muna Alasadi  Jamal Al Tahat  Patrick Connors  Frederick Deknatel  Wafa Hallam  Sophie Holin  Raed Jarrar  Muna Alasadi  Jamal Al Tahat  Patrick Connors  Frederick Deknatel  Wafa Hallam  Sophie Holin  Raed Jarrar

Michelle Alexander  Nihad Awad  Sahar Aziz  Louis Bickford  Reed Brody  Mongi Dhaouadi  Tawakkol Karman  Esam Omeish  Sarah Leah Whitson

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NON-RESIDENT FELLOWS

Hala Aldosari
Hala Al-Dosari is a Saudi women’s activist. She was awarded the Alison Des Forges Award for Extraordinary Activism by Human Rights Watch in 2018.

Yassine al-Haj Saleh
Yassine al-Haj Saleh is a Syrian writer and political dissident. He writes widely on political, social and cultural subjects relating to Syria and the Arab world for a variety of international Arabic-language publications.

Madawi Al-Rasheed
Madawi is Visiting Professor at the LSE Middle East Centre. In January 2017, she returned to the MEC from a sabbatical year at the Middle East Institute, the National University of Singapore.

Yara Asi
Dr. Yara M. Asi is an Assistant Professor at the University of Central Florida in the School of Global Health Management and Informatics.

Mohamad Bazzi
Mohamad Bazzi is an associate professor of journalism at New York University, where he teaches international reporting.

Joel Beinin
Joel Beinin is the Donald J. McLachlan Professor of History and Professor of Middle East History, Emeritus at Stanford University.

Diana Buttu
Diana Buttu is a lawyer specializing in negotiations, international law and international human rights law.

Juan Cole
Juan Cole is the Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History at the University of Michigan.

Leena Dallasheh
Leena Dallasheh is an Associate Professor of History at Humboldt State University.

Omar Dewachi
Omar Dewachi is an associate professor of medical anthropology and global health at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

Mohamed Dhaia Hammami
Mohamed Dhaia Hammami is a Ph.D. candidate in political science at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

Mohammad H Fadel
Mohammad Fadel is a professor at Tokyo Research Chair for the Law and Economics of Islamic Law at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law.

Dalia Fahmy
Dr. Dalia Fahmy is Associate Professor of Political Science at Long Island University where she teaches courses on US Foreign Policy, World Politics, and Politics of the Middle East.

Nader Hashemi
Nader Hashemi is the Director of the Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and an Associate Professor of Middle East and Islamic Politics at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

Marc Owen Jones
Marc Owen Jones is an Assistant Professor of Middle East Studies at Hamad bin Khalifa University.

Kholood Khair
Kholood Khair is a Sudanese political analyst and the founding director of Confidence Advisory, a “think-and-do” tank based in Khartoum.

Michael Lynk
Michael Lynk is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Law of Western University in Ontario. From 2016 to 2022, he served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967.

Josh Paul
Josh Paul resigned from the State Department in October, 2023 due to his disagreement with the Biden administration’s decision to rush lethal military assistance to Israel in the context of its war on Gaza.
PARTNERSHIPS

Democracy in the Arab World Now (DAWN) focuses on democracy and human rights in the greater Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Our vision is for a world where the human rights, liberty, and dignity of every person in the region are upheld by democratically elected governments, safeguarded by independent institutions and civil society organizations working under the rule of law. Our goal is to ensure that U.S. foreign policy supports the people in MENA by ending support for their abusive, undemocratic governments. We are proud to recognize the following institutional supporters who help further our work.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTERS

PROGRAM PARTNERS

GALA SUPPORTERS
PROJECTS

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LOBBYIST HALL OF SHAME

CULPRITS GALLERY

UNJUST PROSECUTIONS

ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECTS
INTRODUCTION

DAWN’s advocacy-driven research aims to uncover the anti-democratic practices and human rights violations of MENA governments supported by the United States, exposing the officials who serve as the agents of repression and the U.S.-based lobbyists promoting the interests of these abusive governments, and seeks to hold them accountable. DAWN’s foreign policy analysis examines political developments in the region and the impact of US policies on democracy, human rights, and national interests.

DAWN also seeks to critically examine the approaches to the region by the U.S. foreign policy community, including its role in maintaining support for militarized, abusive U.S. policies in the region, and to offer recommendations for change.

DAWN continuously monitors developments in the United States and MENA countries, producing a steady stream of policy recommendations, commentary and analysis on critical developments related to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in the region.

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS HIGHLIGHTS

DAWN’s signature research projects include our Lobbyist Hall of Shame, where we reveal the roles of individual U.S.-based lobbyists in creating a veneer of legitimacy and securing U.S. support for abusive MENA governments; the Culprits Gallery, where we expose the mid-level MENA government officials responsible for ongoing repression and abuse. Along with six 2023 culprit profiles, we also introduced 40 Israeli military officials who are ‘Prime Suspects’ in Israel’s post-October 7 violations in Gaza. And in the Unjust Prosecutions Gallery, we exhaustively document emblematic cases of political prisoners in the MENA region.

Through a variety of mediums including briefing papers or long-form analysis, workshops, and roundtables, DAWN has shared analyses, incorporated the perspectives of influential thinkers in the community, and engaged wider audiences. For example, DAWN issued detailed policy recommendations to the Biden administration on ending the war in Gaza, urging the U.S. to support a ceasefire, the deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force, and other measures to ensure the reconstruction of Gaza without blockade, siege, or other punitive Israeli government actions.
LOBBYIST HALL OF SHAME

DAWN’s Lobbyist Hall of Shame exposes the U.S.-based lobbyists paid to keep U.S. support flowing to some of the MENA region’s worst human rights violators. We use each profile to call the lobbyist out by name, challenge their ethics, and publicize the harmful role they play in aiding and abetting human rights violators. **We also offer detailed recommendations** to Congress, lobbyists, and U.S. State Bar Associations to help them uphold their domestic and international legal obligations.

**2021–2022**

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**SAUDI ARABIA IN 2023**

**ISRAEL**

**SAUDI ARABIA**

**U.A.E.**

**LOBBYIST HALL OF SHAME**

**CULPRITS GALLERY**

**UNJUST PROSECUTIONS**

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CULPRITS GALLERY

Tyrants need enablers who will implement their oppressive policies. DAWN seeks to disclose the identity of the state agents who enable repression, making them recognizable at home and abroad. These individuals, whom DAWN calls “culprits,” bear administrative, civil, moral, legal, and/or political responsibility for human rights and international humanitarian law violations.

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CULPRITS GALLERY

41
2020 - 2023

2
ISRAEL

2
U.A.E.

6
IN 2023

1
SAUDI ARABIA

1
EGYPT

JUDGE MAJ (RES)
MAOR EVEN-KHEN
Arbitrarily Detained Elderly US Citizen in West Bank Prison

BRIG.-GEN NAAMA ROSEN-GRIMBERG
Arbitrarily Detained Elderly U.S. Citizen in West Bank Citizen

SENIOR SAUDI MINISTER MOHAMMED BIN ABDULMALEK AL-SHEIKH
Oversaw Torture and Shakedowns of Detainees at Ritz-Carlton

JUDGE FALAH AL-HAJRI
Convicted Peaceful Activists and Ignored Evidence of Torture

JUDGE HASSAN FARID EL-SHAMI
Sentenced Dozens of Egyptians to Death Following Mass Trials Lacking Any Semblance of Due Process

ACTING ADVOCATE GENERAL
AHMED AL-DHANHANI
Prosecuted 94 Activists for Their Peaceful Activism

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INTRODUCTION | LOBBYIST HALL OF SHAME | CULPRITS GALLERY | UNJUST PROSECUTIONS | ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECTS
UNJUST PROSECUTIONS

DAWN’s Unjust Prosecutions Gallery documents individual cases of political detainees being held unjustly. Drawing upon primary and secondary sources, these comprehensive case files document the conditions of arrest and charges brought against each detainee, their detention conditions, trials or sentencing, and instances of government retaliation against their family members. Those profiled reflect a cross-section of society and include not only human rights activists and journalists, but also businesspeople, former government officials, and other elites.
ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECTS

SELECT SAMPLE

**RULE OF LAW AND GOOD GOVERNANCE**
Prominent Yemenis and International Experts To Discuss Sustainable Peace and Democracy in Yemen at Washington DC Conference, 1/4
Jordan: Six Questions U.S. Congress Members Should Ask King Abdullah During D.C. Visit, 1/27

**HUMAN RIGHTS**
UAE: No Justice or Accountability a Decade After Mass Sentencing of 69 Peaceful Activists, 6/29
U.S.: Impose Leahy Law Sanctions on YAMAM, Israel’s National Counter-Terrorism Unit, for Extrajudicial Killings, 7/6

**SECURITY AND DEFENSE**
U.S.: Investigate New Evidence of President Trump’s Business Dealings with MBS, 1/15
U.S.: Adam Emanuel, Lobbyist for Government-Owned Israel Aerospace Industries NA, Skirts Foreign Agent Requirements, 7/24

**FOREIGN POLICY**
U.S.: DAWN Workshop Evaluates Proposals for Engaged Foreign Policy Rooted in Restraint, 11/8
US: Support Ceasefire, Peacekeeping Forces and International Inspections for Post-Conflict Gaza, 11/21

**FOREIGN AID**
U.S.: Suspend Military Aid to Egypt in Wake of Menendez Indictment for Corruption by Egyptian Government, 9/23
U.S.: Monitor and Restrict Use of U.S. Weapons by Israel to Avoid Complicity in War Crimes, 10/15

**ACCOUNTABILITY**
US Congress: Pass the Khashoggi Act and Khashoggi Resolution, 10/2
International Criminal Court: Investigate These Israeli Suspects in War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity Probe, 12/20
ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

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ENDING SUPPORT FOR ABUSIVE GOVERNMENTS

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ABUSERS AND ENABLERS

REFORMING US LAWS

REVITALIZING HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY
INTRODUCTION

DAWN’s advocacy mission is uniquely focused on reforming U.S. foreign policy to end its support of autocratic and apartheid governments in the region, and promoting laws and policies to protect U.S. democracy from foreign government influence and repression. We work to promote democracy in the Middle East and protect democratic institutions in the United States.

GOVERNMENT ADVOCACY

DAWN held dozens of meetings with Congress, State Department, White House staff, and other elected officials to:

- Re-introduce the Khashoggi Act by Congressman Adam Schiff. The act was cosponsored by Congresswoman McCollum, Congressman Connolly, Congressman McGovern, Delegate Norton, and Congresswoman Tokuda.
- Suspend arms transfers to Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Investigate violations by U.S. allies in the region, such as the murder of Shireen Abu-Akleh by Israeli forces. Sanction foreign individuals implicated in transnational repression by utilizing the Khashoggi Ban. DAWN is the current chair of the Khashoggi Ban Working Group.
- Rename the square outside Saudi Arabia’s Los Angeles Consulate “Jamal Khashoggi Square.”
- Challenge the Biden Administration’s inclusion of Israel in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program.
- Encourage the application of the Leahy Law to Israeli units that committed gross violations of human rights.
- Investigate and determine that Israel Bonds is an unregistered foreign agent in violation of the Foreign Agent Registration Act (FARA).

CONVENINGS

DAWN assembled dozens of participants from leading think tanks, human rights groups, universities, and advocacy organizations for a workshop addressing the merits and limitations of a more restrained U.S. foreign policy.

DAWN convened legal, human rights, policy and diplomatic experts to examine the charge of genocide against Israel in its military assault on Gaza and published a report of the findings.

DAWN and the Tawakkol Karman Foundation convened a conference with leading Yemeni officials, experts, stakeholders, and policymakers on how to reach a permanent ceasefire and build lasting peace and democracy in Yemen.

DAWN hosted an expert webinar discussing how autocratic governments in the Middle East have aided China’s repression of its Muslim communities, especially ethnic Uyghurs from Xinjiang province.

JOINT ADVOCACY

DAWN published 35 joint letters with over 25 major partner research and advocacy organizations.
DAWN’s third year of advocacy work coalesced around four focus areas, all of which were heavily informed by our research and analysis. Direct advocacy with U.S. policymakers focused on issues where we have specific and unique expertise or experience, including by bringing in the voices of political exiles.
ENDING SUPPORT FOR ABUSIVE GOVERNMENTS

In 2023, amid escalating global tensions, the U.S. increased its global arms sales to $81 billion, a significant leap over the previous year. DAWN’s advocacy focuses on challenging U.S. arms dealings with MENA’s abusive regimes, urging transparency and adherence to U.S. laws against arming human rights violators. It aims to reveal U.S. complicity in bolstering such governments, advocating for policies that prioritize human rights and align with American interests.

DAWN’s advocacy seeks to enforce largely ignored U.S. laws that ban the transfer of arms to systematically abusive governments, identifying how such transfers violate our government’s own obligation not to contribute to or benefit from human rights abuses.

We seek to challenge and disrupt each individual U.S. arms deal with these governments and require the State and Defense Departments to disclose and justify each proposed sale.

We seek to develop new policies for the U.S. government that align with the interests of the American people and do not cause harm to the people of the Middle East.

We seek to expose the political protection and dangerous compromises our government provides these abusive regimes and document how they harm U.S. national interests.
ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ABUSERS AND ENABLERS

DAWN’s research and documentation of the crimes of mid-level government officials who operate under the radar of the global media, and U.S.-based lobbyists hired by abusive regimes, are just the beginning of our work to hold perpetrators and enablers accountable. We use the information we gather to seek accountability using the legal and regulatory mechanisms available to us. These include:

- Seeking the imposition of sanctions under the Magnitsky Act, Leahy Law, Khashoggi Ban, and a U.S. Visa Ban against mid-level government abusers who have engaged in gross crimes, including torture, abuse, and murder. In 2023, DAWN submitted evidence for six officials in Israel and Saudi Arabia, seeking sanctions against them.

- In 2023, in an unprecedented effort, DAWN filed complaints to the International Criminal Court against 40 Israeli military commanders who are potentially responsible for war crimes during Israel’s military campaign in Gaza, and against the Y AMAM Unit of Israel’s border police for two extrajudicial and two indiscriminate and reckless killings.

- Pushing lobbyists to end their contracts with abusive regimes, legislators to refuse to meet with such lobbyists until they do, and regulators to ensure that lobbyists are complying with existing laws. In 2023, DAWN exposed the role of five lobbyists contributing to human rights abuses in the MENA region, including several who have failed to register as required by the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA).
REFORMING US LAWS

Without reform in U.S. laws that permit our government to find end-runs around legislation designed to prohibit arms transfers to abusive governments, and that permit foreign governments to access and influence our legislators, we know that there can be no serious reform in U.S. policies in the Middle East. Such reforms are vital not only to protect the people harmed by MENA governments enabled by the US but to protect the integrity of our own democracy, which is increasingly corrupted by foreign governments. Our work includes:

**Eliminating loopholes** in existing legislation that allow the executive branch to waive laws prohibiting arms transfers to systematically abusive governments.

**Passing new laws** that will ban senior government and military officials from working for or doing business with foreign governments for at least three years after leaving office.

**Requiring lobbyists** to disclose the complete substance of their interactions with lawmakers, banning their work for abusive governments, and prohibiting their campaign contributions.
REVITALIZING HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

DAWN believes that the success of our goals depends on the support and participation of the broader foreign policy community and its approach to advocacy for reform of US policies in the MENA region. DAWN organized a workshop examining how a U.S. foreign policy rooted in restraint can and should be reformed to fulfill international legal obligations and human rights commitments, under the framework Bridging Restraint and Positive Engagement. DAWN held an expert roundtable on whether Israel’s actions in Gaza amount to genocide. DAWN and partners organized workshops that produced policy recommendations for the Biden administration to effectively respond to Israeli settler violence.

We seek to ensure that this community includes the voices and experiences of people from the region who are most directly affected by US policies in their deliberations about and recommendations for the region.

We seek to unify and activate this community through a shared understanding of how our government contributes to rights abuses in the MENA region, the role our analysis and advocacy play in such abuses, and what needs to change here at home to further democracy and human rights in the MENA region.

In 2023, DAWN organized several conferences, workshops, and discussions to evaluate advocacy approaches to US policies in the region and to encourage new methodologies and policies.
"At the heart of *Democracy in Exile* are voices from the region—the stories of political exiles, activists, and analysts who are given an equal platform to outside experts. This is how we cover the Middle East and North Africa differently: by centering regional voices and listening to those who have the most at stake when it comes to human rights and democracy."

**Frederick Deknatel**  
Executive Editor
INTRODUCTION

DAWN’s online journal, Democracy in Exile, is a space for political exiles and activists from the Middle East and North Africa to elevate their voices in key policy debates alongside those of leading MENA experts, journalists, and other commentators.

For too long, the views of those most affected by violence and repression in the MENA region have been silenced by their governments and overlooked by U.S. policymakers.

Democracy in Exile is committed to magnifying these voices, which are essential to understanding the state of human rights and democracy in the region. In everything the journal publishes, including first-hand reporting, analysis, opinion, and interviews, Democracy in Exile works to promote a new vision for the future of the MENA region, where democratic governments respect citizens’ fundamental rights.

Since DAWN’s launch, Democracy in Exile has published nearly 400 articles from 300 different contributors—including political exiles and activists from the region, alongside scholars, journalists, policymakers, poets, writers, and other artists.

Journal articles include critical assessments of U.S. foreign policy, exposés about the anti-democratic practices and human rights violations of America’s closest regional allies, and first-person reflections on what it’s like to live under abusive regional governments.

In 2023, Democracy in Exile expanded its coverage of literature and the arts, including book excerpts from leading authors—like Iraqi journalist Ghaith Abdul-Ahad’s book A Stranger in Your Own City: Travels in the Middle East’s Long War, his firsthand account of the U.S. military occupation of Iraq 20 years ago, and investigative journalist’s Antony Loewenstein’s book The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel Exports the Technology of Occupation Around the World.
COUNTRIES AND ISSUES

Democracy in Exile’s three roundtables in 2023 brought together 35 experts to analyze and debate major political events in the MENA region: the Iraq War’s legacy 20 years later; the 75th anniversary of the Nakba; and the regional impact of Iran’s protests.

The Unlearned Lessons of the Iraq War, 20 Years Later: A Democracy in Exile Roundtable
5/6

Denying the Nakba, 75 Years Later: A Democracy in Exile Roundtable

The Regional Impact of Iran’s Protests, One Year Later: A Democracy in Exile Roundtable

COUNTRY TOPIC BREAKDOWN

Israel and Palestine (27%)
United States (14%)
Saudi Arabia (11%)
Egypt (10%)
Yemen (9%)
Iran (7%)
Syria (6%)
Tunisia (6%)
Middle East (5%)

Remaining coverage includes the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Turkey, Bahrain, and Algeria.

110+
Total articles published

1,123
Average views per article

77
Authors
INTERVIEWS

"Democracy in Exile" conducts in-depth interviews with leading experts, activists and exiles from the region. Highlights in 2023 included exiled Egyptian opposition leader Ayman Nour in Turkey; Palestinian surgeon Ghassan Abu-Sittah in Gaza; Palestinian NGO leader Ubai al-Aboudi; and former Human Rights Watch Executive Director Kenneth Roth.

Ubai Al-Aboudi  
Director of Palestinian NGO

Ghassan Abu-Sittah  
Surgeon in Gaza

Sara Abdelnasser  
Former Political Prisoner in Egypt

George Packer  
Journalist, The Atlantic

Lawrence Wright  
Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author

Ayman Nour  
Exiled Egyptian Opposition Leader

Orly Noy  
Israeli Activist and Journalist

Nathan Thrall  
Author

Natasha Roth-Rowland  
Editor, Israel’s +972 Magazine

Kenneth Roth  
Former Director of Human Rights Watch

Ayman Mohyeldin  
Host of MSNBC’s Ayman
10 MOST-READ ARTICLES

Democracy in Exile’s 10 most-read articles of 2023 encapsulated how we cover the Middle East and North Africa—by magnifying voices in the region.

1. War Crimes by Hamas Don’t Allow Israel to Disregard the Laws of War
   - Surgeon Ghassan Abu-Sittah on the ‘Impending Catastrophe’ in Gaza’s Hospitals
   - Interview by Omid Memarian

2. When Palestinian Lives Are So Dehumanized, Palestinian Suffering Is Normalized
   - Diana Butty

3. Egypt’s New Administrative Capital Is Another Desert Folly
   - Yasser Elsheshtawy

4. Can International Law Prevail in Gaza and Israel?
   - Michael Lynk

5. Ben-Gvir Is Arming Thousands of Israelis—and Playing With Fire
   - Eyal Lurie-Pardes

6. 50 Years Ago, Saudi Arabia Was the Big Winner of the Yom Kippur War. The U.S. Is Still Paying the Price
   - Bruce Radel

7. ‘Door on the Road,’ a Poem From Gaza
   - Poem by Mosab Abu-Taha

8. Settlements Are the Engine of Israel’s ‘Forever Occupation’—and a War Crime
   - Michael Lynk

   - Interview by Michael Omer-Man

10. Surgeon Ghassan Abu-Sittah on the ‘Impending Catastrophe’ in Gaza’s Hospitals
    - Interview by Omid Memarian

Democracy in Exile’s 10 most-read articles of 2023 encapsulated how we cover the Middle East and North Africa—by magnifying voices in the region.
INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION

INTRODUCTION

MEDIA COVERAGE

OPINION PIECES BY STAFF

TV-RADIO APPEARANCES
Influencing public opinion through the media is an important part of DAWN’s work to shift the broader narrative around the Middle East and North Africa and change U.S. foreign policy toward it. The scope of DAWN’s media coverage is, quite simply, remarkable for an organization of our size and tenure.

During our third year, we have built the organizational infrastructure for successful media outreach, including investing in advanced, cutting-edge tools to expand our media footprint and track our reach.

We have embedded communications principles into our content development processes, refined our press release format, and honed our organizational voice all to maximize press pick-up. We have pitched our content widely, nurtured relationships with key journalists, and responded swiftly to breaking events. In our third year we:

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- **63 Global Citations a week**
- **16 Op-eds**
- **290 Media Contacts**

Earned an average of **63 citations a week in global media** coverage, with 38% appearing in U.S. outlets, for an astounding total of 3,290 global media citations in English and Arabic.

Published **16 op-eds in major publications**—an outstanding number for an organization of our size—establishing ourselves as a go-to source of commentary and analysis on developments affecting the region.

Reached out to **over 290 of the top media personalities** covering the MENA region and U.S. foreign policy. Many of these journalists now regularly contact us for commentary and analysis.
MEDIA COVERAGE

A variety of different outlets with a diversity of audiences have consistently quoted staff or covered the organization’s research and advocacy. DAWN regularly maximizes the coverage of these citations as individual tweets or graphic quote cards.

The Washington Post

“Gulf dictatorship acquisitions of American and British sports organizations are only a small part of their strategy to exert influence and control over our political, economic and cultural systems, working to export their domestic repression by censoring critics and to ensure our continued military protection for their vulnerable rule,”

● SARAH LEAH WHITSON, JULY 19

VOA

“We have to rethink U.S. engagement with dictatorships, with human rights abusers. We have to stop supporting them with our weapons and our political capital,”

● RAED JARRAR, SEPTEMBER 29

HAARETZ

“The Biden Administration has an opportunity to prove that the protection of American citizens abroad is a real priority by punishing those who wrongfully imprison citizens for political reasons, even when the abuser is an Israeli military official,”

● MICHAEL OMER-MAN, JULY 11

npr

“If the rest of the world doesn’t believe what the United States says about the importance of democracy and a rules-based order in human rights, it’s because they see that the Biden administration doesn’t believe those things anyway because if they did, their policies in the Middle East would look very differently,”

● SARAH LEAH WHITSON, JUNE 5
"While Jake Sullivan and Secretary Blinken have sold the [Abraham Accords] as a magical formula for stability in the region, the only thing it will actually secure is strengthening – with an unprecedented U.S. security guarantee – an axis of dictatorships who will ally with Israel’s apartheid government and stay mum about the Palestinians."

SARAH LEAH WHITSON, OCTOBER 8

"I think the Emiratis and the Saudis would much prefer to hide and bury facts and information about their records. It’s a small indication of how afraid they are of their own population."

SARAH LEAH WHITSON, NOVEMBER 3

"The very least the US can do is to impose Leahy Law sanctions for the murder of an American against a repeat offender Israeli unit that has been killing and abusing Palestinians with impunity for years."

ADAM SHAPIRO, FEBRUARY 11

"Forty countries participate in the Visa Waiver Program, and none have formal arrangements to discriminate against American citizens; only Israel has demanded and been granted this unconscionable favor by the US government."

ADAM SHAPIRO, SEPTEMBER 28
OP-EDS IN LEADING PUBLICATIONS

DAWN publishes Op-Ed’s strategically in select outlets that we know our target audiences will read. Subject matter addressed in these articles has played to the strengths of our individual staff members’ writing, analysis, and unique expertise in the field.

SELECT SAMPLE

Breaking Away From Secret Concessions in the Middle East
JON HOFFMAN AND SARAH LEAH WHITSON
MARCH 28

The Arab Autocrat’s New Religious Playbook
MICHAEL OMER-MAN
OCTOBER 18

The world is complicit in a broken Gaza paradigm,
MICHAEL OMER-MAN
MAGAZINE

It’s Time to Scrap the Abraham Accords
SARAH LEAH WHITSON
DECEMBER 4

Why Mohamed bin Salman’s Slush Fund is an Urgent National Security Matter for Congress
SARAH LEAH WHITSON
FEBRUARY 22

Why is the US still sending an endless supply of arms to Israel without conditions?
MICHAEL OMER-MAN
DECEMBER 7
TV & RADIO APPEARANCES

DAWN has become a reliable source for commentary on breaking news, current events, and U.S. foreign policy analysis and recommendations.
ENGAGING ONLINE

INTRODUCTION

WEBSITE

SOCIAL MEDIA

VIRTUAL EVENTS
INTRODUCTION

DAWN’s online engagement tools include our English and Arabic websites and 10 social media accounts, including that of DAWN’s journal. To maximize our reach with target audiences, we publish and promote our content in both English and Arabic, and curate separate English and Arabic social media accounts.

We also host stand-alone X (formerly Twitter) accounts for Egypt and Saudi Arabia, each of which carries country-specific content users inside Egypt and Saudi Arabia cannot access elsewhere due to government censorship.

ENGAGING ONLINE HIGHLIGHTS

DAWN’s English social media accounts have attracted followers from leading influencers including U.S. journalists, policymakers, and human rights and foreign policy experts. Our Arabic accounts attract Arabic media personalities, scholars, and everyday people from the MENA region.

X (formerly Twitter) is the main carrier of DAWN’s content. We receive an average of 280,000 impressions a month, and have been retweeted by prominent figures such as journalists Ayman Mohyeldin and Mehdi Hassan, and Congressional Representative Ilhan Omar.

Our compelling content and live events on Twitter Spaces, Zoom events, and Facebook Live have helped fuel continuous organic growth across platforms and connected us to new allies in the policy, activist, and academic communities.
*DAWN's Website is blocked in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, therefore their statistics do not appear. Alternatively, Saudi citizens use a VPN to access DAWN's content. www.DAWNmena.org is the final destination for all social media traffic. Dynamic, engaging, and increasingly user friendly, we make continuous advancements and updates to the website based on feedback from staff and close monitoring of user behavior, engagement, and traffic.
X (formerly Twitter) continues to be the main carrier of DAWN’s content. We maintain 10 social media profiles across 4 different platforms, to effectively reach audiences in regions where different platforms are more popular.
VIRTUAL EVENTS

SELECT SAMPLE

31
DAWN Staff Speaking Engagements

VIRTUAL EVENTS

INTRODUCTION | WEBSITE | SOCIAL MEDIA | VIRTUAL EVENTS

These increasingly popular virtual event hosting platforms are an important way for DAWN to engage a broader audience in our work, offering a space for discussions that invite participatory debate.
INTRODUCTION

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR KHASHOGGI MURDER

2023 INAUGURAL GALA
INTRODUCTION

DAWN believes that only democratic governance rooted in human rights and the rule of law will create the conditions necessary for a peaceful and stable Middle East and North Africa where people live with dignity and in freedom.

Our theory of change is premised on work that seeks to (1) end the United States’ central role in supporting abusive MENA governments that quash democracy and rights; (2) reform the laws that allow foreign governments to infiltrate U.S. decision-making; (3) promote the political exile community as an important asset to develop, protect, and nurture prospects for rights-respecting, democratic change in the region; (4) hold accountable abusive foreign government officials and their American enablers.

The forces working against us are formidable: from dictators with bottomless bank accounts and sophisticated digital surveillance tools, to weapons manufacturers who profit through military support to these dictators, to multi-million-dollar lobbying firms with behemoth public relations teams. Yet despite the challenges, our nascent organization continues to have an impact. In our third year alone, we made notable strides toward:

**Influencing U.S. foreign policy toward the region**, including by calling on the DOJ and Congress to open investigations which led to Senate hearings on the proposed LIV/PGA merger, and unrelenting advocacy to hold U.S. officials accountable for aiding Israel in carrying out atrocities in Gaza.

**Shifting the narrative around the region and the U.S. role in it**, including by breaking a number of stories to the news, including the Saudi government’s infiltration of Wikipedia, framing public discussion around the proposed LIV/PGA merger, initiating the global call for a ceasefire in Gaza as well as steps to hold Israeli officials accountable for war crimes in Gaza by submitting 40 ‘Prime Suspects’ from Israel’s military to the International Criminal Court for investigation.

**Holding regional human rights abusers and their enablers accountable**, including by successfully re-introducing the Khashoggi Act, filing submissions to the ICC and for Leahy Law sanctions requests on human rights violators, and securing the renaming of the street in front of the Saudi Consulate “Khashoggi Square”, a milestone toward achieving justice for our founder.
IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Senate Investigation of Saudi-owned LIV Golf’s proposed merger with PGA Tour, Saudi Investments in U.S. Economy

When news of the Saudi-owned LIV Golf merger with PGA Tours broke, DAWN ensured that the public and policymakers were informed of concerns about Saudi ownership, payments to former government officials, contributions to human rights abuses, and sportswashing. Major media outlets, including the New York Times, New Yorker, The Guardian, and NPR, featured DAWN’s analysis. Following DAWN’s advocacy for Senate investigation of the proposed merger, including questions to ask PGA officials, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations initiated what have now been two investigative hearings, and the merger is reportedly canceled.

Submission of 40 IDF “Prime Suspects” to the ICC

Following in-depth research, in December DAWN submitted to ICC prosecutor Karim Khan an unprecedented dossier of ‘Prime Suspects’ for the ongoing ICC investigation – 40 Israeli military commanders who have taken part in, or who have direct command responsibility over potential war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. DAWN then shared the names, photos, and roles of the 40 ‘Prime Suspects’ on social media and on the DAWN website. Khan had confirmed in December that an ICC probe of possible crimes by Hamas and Israeli forces “is a priority for my office.”
About DAWN

Advocacy Priorities

DAWN’s Journal

Influencing Public Opinion

Engaging Online

Impact

Release of Palestinian-American from Israeli Detention

Seventy-six-year-old Palestinian-American Jamal Niser was arbitrarily detained by Israel for eight months without charge or trial. DAWN publicized his case and briefed U.S. officials, leading to State Department follow-up with the Israeli government, and Senator Sharrod Brown’s follow-up with Secretary of State Blinken. Sixteen days after DAWN publicized his case, Israel released Niser. DAWN continues to demand that Israeli authorities allow Niser to leave the West Bank without conditions.

Establishing the Finding of Genocide by Israel in Gaza

In early December, 25 days before South Africa submitted its landmark case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) alleging that Israel was violating the Genocide Convention in Gaza, DAWN convened a panel of experts—scholars, lawyers and policymakers—for a public roundtable on whether Israel’s actions in Gaza amount to genocide. The roundtable discussion and resulting expert articles helped to build understanding and public support for the charge later brought in late December by South Africa at the ICJ.

U.S. responds to Saudi Arabia’s transnational repression against U.S. citizen

Reuters broke the story, then picked up worldwide, of DAWN’s months-long investigation on the Saudi government’s retaliation against the family of U.S. citizen Rakan Aldossari. The Biden Administration had not acknowledged past communications from the Aldossari family, but, following DAWN’s investigation, issued a statement reiterating concerns expressed to Saudi Arabia about “reports or threats of transnational repression, particularly when U.S. citizens may be involved.”
IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Key Congressman calls for subpoena related to Saudi government investment in Jared Kushner fund

Congressman Jamie Raskin called in August for his House Committee on Oversight and Accountability to subpoena documents from Jared Kushner’s private equity firm Affinity Partners related to the $2 billion investment in Affinity by the Saudi Government Public Investment Fund and investments by other Gulf monarchies. This followed coverage of DAWN’s calls beginning in April, 2022 for a U.S. investigation into Kushner’s possible “unlawful and unethical conduct, including conflicts of interest,” and “solicitation of foreign government officials while in office.”

Release of Egyptian activist in Turkey

Following advocacy by DAWN, Turkey released Egyptian activist Ghada Naguib in November, after one month of detention. After stripping Naguib of her Egyptian nationality in 2020, the Egyptian government had repeatedly demanded that Turkish authorities silence her social media activism. Activists expressed concern over the risk that Turkey would deport Naguib to Egypt, where she would likely face persecution and torture.

Leading the call for ceasefire in Gaza

DAWN helped to lay the groundwork for a global civil society campaign for a U.N. ceasefire call in Israel-Palestine. On October 9, two days after intense fighting erupted, DAWN was the first major organization to publicly urge the U.N. Security Council and the U.N. General Assembly to call for a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza, and for the return of civilian captives. By October 20th the ceasefire call was echoed by over 350 organizations in 70 countries.
ACCOUNTABILITY FOR KHASHOGGI MURDER

Khashoggi Square in Los Angeles

DAWN worked with the Los Angeles City Council to secure passage in May of a resolution to rename the square in front of Saudi Arabia’s Los Angeles Consulate in honor of DAWN’s late founder Jamal Khashoggi. On October 2, the fifth anniversary of Jamal’s murder by agents of Saudi Arabia’s government, the square was renamed “Jamal Khashoggi Square” in an official public ceremony, with LA City Council member Traci Park and DAWN representatives.

Civil Society Leaders Commemorate Khashoggi in D.C. Event

DAWN brought together over 170 leading journalists, civil society leaders, and elected officials for a significant U.S. Middle East policy event commemorating the life and legacy of Jamal Khashoggi at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.. DAWN recognized journalists Ayman Mohyeldin and Solafa Magdy with our inaugural Integrity Award, for exemplifying Khashoggi’s commitment to securing freedom and democracy in the Middle East and North Africa. Additional keynote speakers included Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Tawakkol Karman, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Lawrence Wright, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Kai Bird.
Five years after Jamal Khashoggi’s murder, DAWN organized a commemoration of his life and legacy at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., attended by over 170 leading journalists, civil society leaders, and elected officials on October 4.

**SPEAKERS**

- **Bill McCarren**
  - Executive Director, National Press Club
- **Sahar Aziz**
  - DAWN Board Member
- **Tawakkol Karman**
  - Nobel Prize Laureate and DAWN Board Member
- **Lawrence Wright**
  - Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author
- **Sarah Leah Whitson**
  - DAWN Executive Director
- **Bill McCarren**
  - Executive Director, National Press Club
- **Sahar Aziz**
  - DAWN Board Member
- **Tawakkol Karman**
  - Nobel Prize Laureate and DAWN Board Member
- **Lawrence Wright**
  - Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author
- **Sarah Leah Whitson**
  - DAWN Executive Director

**VIDEO TRIBUTES**

- **Sen. Jeff Merkley**
  - (OR)
- **Rep. Adam Schiff**
  - (CA)
- **Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton**
  - (DC)
- **Rep. Gerry Connolly**
  - (VA)
- **Rep. Adam Smith**
  - (WA)
DAWN’S ANNUAL INTEGRITY AWARD

We recognized journalists Ayman Mohyeldin and Solafa Magdy with our inaugural Integrity Award for their remarkable contributions to journalism, relentless pursuit of truth, dedication to holding those in power accountable, and commitment to speaking out against oppression and injustice.
DAWN’S 2023 INAUGURAL GALA

[Images of people at the gala, including speakers, guests, and awards presentations.]
While the change DAWN seeks will take time, we believe our impact to date is a harbinger of what is to come—but only if we maintain our momentum and expand our network of allies and supporters.

There are many ways to support DAWN’s mission, including by donating to our cause, sharing our messages on social media, and joining our online events.

Please sign up for our email updates, visit us at dawnmena.org, or send a message to info@dawnmena.org to learn more.

If you are already an ally, partner, or supporter, thank you for being part of the movement to build a more peaceful, prosperous, and democratic Middle East and North Africa, where the human rights of all people are respected and upheld.

JOIN US!