

# The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI)

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The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut is an independent, research-based, policy-oriented institute. Inaugurated in 2006, the institute aims to harness, develop, and initiate policy-relevant research in the Arab region. The Issam Fares Institute is committed to expanding and deepening knowledge production in and about the Arab region, and to creating a space for the interdisciplinary exchange of ideas among researchers, civil society actors and policy-makers.

The Institute's main research programs and projects are:

## Climate Change and Environment

The Climate Change and Environment Program aims to initiate, develop and harness research, from both applied and social sciences fields, to define the most appropriate policy recommendations on issues related to climate change and environment in Lebanon and the Arab world. The program further aspires to activate the link between research and policy-making with the objective of improving policy development and the production of scientific discourse in response to policy needs. The program also intends to influence national and regional debates in international negotiations on climate change and sustainable development.

## Education and Youth Policy Research

The Education and Youth Policy Research Program aims at informing educational policy and promoting improved educational practices and achievement through an increased understanding of the issues of education in the Arab world and their impact on children and youth in the region. The program further aims at engaging in applied, policy-relevant research to help policy-makers make decisions based on best available information. The program will serve as a resource for government agencies and other institutions in order to shape the education and youth policy debate through evidence.

## Human Rights in the Arab World Program

This program seeks to advance the state of knowledge about human rights in the Arab world. For decades, Arab activists, academics and organizations have been working in the field of human rights. Mapping and analyzing this history is one important objective of this program. However, the primary objective is to investigate and analyze how the practices and discourses related to human rights have been affected by contemporary political upheavals over the last four years as countries across the region have witnessed pro-democracy uprisings. One overarching goal is to understand if and how these developments have altered and/or complicated demands for human rights and affected the work of activists and organizations.

## International Affairs

The International Affairs Program (IA) studies general trends of world politics from the perspective of their influence on Arab realities. More specifically, it examines the impact of policies designed and pursued by major international actors, states and international organizations, on policies in Arab countries. The program focuses on the analysis of foreign policies in Arab countries as they are shaped by regional and national developments. It seeks to contribute towards informing the making of foreign policy drawing on research-based activities, contacts with the diplomatic community and other exchanges with actors concerned.

## Non-state Actors Program

The increased role of non-state actors is a major recent phenomenon attributed to the advancement in communication as well as to the social, political and economic transformations. This program looks at a wide spectrum of non-state actors and their role in policy-making. We study how civil society actors organize themselves into advocacy coalitions and how policy networks are formed to influence policy processes and outcomes. We also look at policy research institutes and their contribution to the translation of knowledge to policies. The media's expanding role, which some claim to be a major player in catalyzing protests and revolutions in the Arab world, will also be explored.

## Palestinian Oral History Archive

The Palestinian Oral History Archive is an archival collection that contains more than 1,000 hours of testimonies with first generation Palestinians and other Palestinian communities in Lebanon. The project will digitize, index, catalog, preserve, and provide access to the material through the creation of a state-of the art digital platform. It aims to expand and include additional oral history collections documenting varied aspects of the Palestinian experience in Lebanon and the region. The project is being completed in partnership with the AUB Libraries, the Nakba Archive and the Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts (AL-JANA).

## **Public Policy Impact Lab**

The Public Policy Impact Lab was launched in Fall 2015 with the aim to enhance the Institute's impact on policy decisions in Lebanon and beyond. The Lab will build synergies among the Institute's inter-disciplinary research programs and will innovatively translate the evidence we produce into policy circles. It will effectively engage with policy-makers and policy actors. The Lab will nurture the "Consumer-Citizen Lab" as an experimental and innovative initiative for formulating and testing Consumer-Citizen policies.

## **Refugee Research and Policy**

Lebanon and the Arab region are facing one of the largest refugee crises that have spawned serious public policy challenges. Given this context, the Refugee Research and Policy in the Arab World Program seeks to harness refugee-related, policy-oriented research that addresses an existing knowledge gap, enrich the quality of refugee-related debate among scholars, officials, international organizations and civil society actors, and subsequently inform decision- and policy-makers in the Middle East and beyond.

## **Social Justice and Development Policy**

In collaboration with the Bobst Center for Peace and Justice at Princeton University, the Social Justice and Development Policy in the Arab World Program tries to further understand through research the many different meanings of the phrase "Social Justice" and its social and economic policy implications. The program looks at social justice in the realm of urbanism, labor unions, social policies, and protest movements. Each component has a dedicated project that aims at establishing a partnership, through research, between scholars, policy-makers, and activists in Lebanon (and beyond).

## **United Nations in the Arab World**

The United Nations in the Arab World Program was created with the objective of exploring and analyzing the role of the UN in the Arab region and the impact it has had on regional politics and societies. The aim of the program is to collect, support and generate research relevant to the UN's multiple roles in the Arab region. In addition, the program aims to bring together scholars and decision makers to discuss salient issues, to be able to develop a rich academic environment in the Arab world, and to inform public policy decisions.

## **Nadim Makdisi Memorial Fund**

The Issam Fares Institute received a generous endowment from the Makdisi family to honor the memory of Nadim A. Makdisi, one of Lebanon's most accomplished journalists and publishers. We invite annually a prominent or recognized promising journalist or expert in current affairs with particular emphasis on the Middle East to give a public lecture to the AUB community. The fund also annually awards a grant to a graduate student whose thesis covers relevant issues in journalism and current affairs.