

IFI NEWSLETTER

January - February 2026

Note: This issue of our bi-monthly newsletter was originally intended to be shared in early March, but was delayed due to the escalation and dangerous developments unfolding in Lebanon. We send it now, highlighting the Institute's activities during the first two months of 2026, in the hope of resuming our regular activities soon. In the meantime, and more importantly, we pray for everyone's safety and well-being during these extremely difficult times, and hope for better days for our country and the region.

NEWS



BEIRUT SECURITY DEBATES 2026: POSTPONED

Due to the current circumstances, the 4th edition of the IFI-FES Beirut Security Debates (BSD) will be postponed. The conference convenes scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to critically examine evolving power dynamics, regional agency, and emerging frameworks for cooperation and stability, to generate forward-looking and policy-relevant insights. Stay tuned for updates.

Revisit previous BSD editions here.



JUNIOR FELLOWS PROGRAM

We are excited to announce the official launch of the IFI-PPIA Fellowship Program! In its first cohort, five junior fellows have been selected to work on diverse and timely research projects. The fellows will be mentored by IFI University and Associate Fellows matched to them based on their respective areas of expertise. This program is funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Follow the Institute's social media channels as we share more details about each fellow, their progress, related activities, along with their policy outputs that align with the Institute's overall strategy and clusters.



Arab TTN Newsletter Quarter 4

The latest edition of the Arab Think Tank Network (ATTN) newsletter is out. This quarterly issue covers topics, including the war on Gaza and its aftermath, Syria's expanding but fragile civic space in the post-Assad transition, post-conflict pathways in the Levant, and regional strategic positioning amid ongoing regional transformations.

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2025 REVIEW: INSTITUTE HIGHLIGHTS

While 2026 is already in full swing, we invite you to take a step back to revisit the Institute's 2025 highlights for a brief recap of last year's main news - a year of new beginnings, continuations, and culminations - and look ahead to what will guide our research and policy engagement in the year ahead.

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INSTITUTE DIRECTOR AT THE AUB DEBS CENTER

During a recent visit to New York, Institute Director Joseph Bahout met with our colleagues at the AUB Debs Center to discuss the vital role that universities and think tanks like IFI play in bridging the gap between academic research and real-world policymaking. He reflected on how rigorous, evidence-based research can be turned into accessible insights that inform public debate, influence policy decisions, and generate meaningful impact beyond academia.

[Watch Here](#)



INSTITUTE IN ACTION

Over the past two months, our Institute actively participated in regional and international policy forums, contributing to discussions and exchanging insights with global policymakers and experts. These engagements took place in the *Vladiv Discussion Club in Moscow*, and *NewDebi*, as part of the *FutureWORKS Collective*, reflecting the Institute's expanding global reach.

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PUBLICATIONS



THE NEW GAP LAW: A USEFUL FRAMEWORK WITH STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY
 SAADE CHAMI



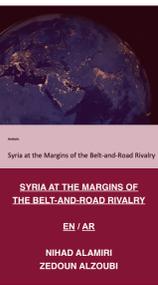
MAKING USE OF LEBANON'S GOLD: A TANGIBLE PROPOSAL
 ALBERT KOSTANIAN



EXPLORING THE LINKS BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL COHESION, AND CONFLICT IN LEBANON
 YARA MOURAD
 NADIA NAIMER
 MAYSA BAROUD



LEBANON'S STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THEM
 SAMI GEADAH
 SARAH BOROJ
 NIZAR BOU KARROUM



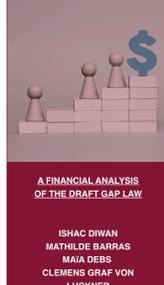
SYRIA AT THE MARGINS OF THE BELT-AND-ROAD RIVALRY
 EN / AR
 NIHAD ALAMIRI
 ZEDOUN ALZOUBI



ON THE OBSOLESCENCE OF HATE SPEECH DETECTION FOR MEMORY-BASED CONFLICTS
 FATIMA ABU SALEM
 WISSAM SAADE



INVESTING IN THE POWER OF YOUTH FOR COUNTERING AND ADDRESSING HATE SPEECH AND PREVENTING GENOCIDE
 IFI-ABUJ CONFERENCE REPORT



A FINANCIAL ANALYSIS OF THE DRAFT GAP LAW
 ISHAC DIWAN
 MATHILDE BARRAS
 MARIE DEBS
 CLEMENS GRAF VON LUCKNER



Walking on the edge: Syria one year after the great transformation

Zedoun Al Zoubi

One year after the fall of the Assad regime and Ahmed Al-Sharaa's dramatic rise to power, Syria continues to face existential questions: How will Syria confront the dangers of civil war, economic collapse, Israeli occupation, civil war, and terrorism?

Read More: EN / AR



US Withdrawal from International Organizations: Implications for Global Order

Alexander Haddad and Yeghia Tashjian

"On January 7, 2026, the White House announced the US withdrawal from 66 international organizations, conventions, and treaties. This comes after the already announced withdrawal in 2025 from UNESCO, the Paris Climate agreement and the WHO."

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AUB Model UN Conference: Bridging the Lines Between Politics and Interest

Yehya Iskandarani and Selma Riachi

"AUBMUNC, known initially as BEYMUN, has continually evolved and is now in its most influential and transformative form yet. The evolution stands as a testament to the growth of this small university-led initiative, recognized for its academic impact and prestigious reputation."

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ANNOUNCEMENTS



SWANA EARLY CAREER SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The Early Career Scholars Program at the Southwest Asia and North Africa Future of Work Hub is your chance to join a dynamic research community at AUB Lebanon for the 2026-2027 academic year. This fully funded opportunity supports PhD candidates and recent graduates researching AI, climate change, and the future of work in the SWANA region. Based in Lebanon you'll contribute to transformative research, gain expert mentorship, and connect with the global FutureWORKS Collective network.

Deadline: April 30, 2026.

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INTERNS SPRING COHORT 2026

Our Spring 2026 Internship Program has begun! An orientation session was held for the new group of interns, who were introduced to the scope of their upcoming internship and engaged with IFI staff to learn more about the institute's work and ongoing initiatives. A warm welcome to each and every one of them, and we hope they make the most of this experience with us!

To know more about the Institute's Internship Program, visit our website.

EVENTS



02/24/2026

حلقة نقاش - "طرابلس: العودة إلى الأساس"

Held with AUB's Public Policy and International Affairs Program (PPIA), the "Tripoli: Back to the Basics" discussion, within the context of the tragedy of collapsing buildings, aimed to reframe prevailing narratives about Tripoli, moving beyond portrayals of perpetual crisis and marginalization to highlight the city's substantial urban, economic, and social potential.

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02/12/2026

THIRD ANNUAL REGIONAL POLICY FORUM: THE FUTURE OF WORK AND SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE ARAB REGION

Our Institute, in partnership with the Arab Reform Initiative (ARI), held the "Third Annual Regional Policy Forum: The Future of Work and Social Protection in the Arab Region" on February 12. The forum explored the policy reforms needed to safeguard social security and decent work, while examining how they interact with structural issues such as conflict, displacement, and fragility.

02/06/2026

"THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE BANKING SYSTEM: KEY CHALLENGES AHEAD"

On February 6, the Institute held a closed roundtable with around 20 economic and financial experts to discuss viable options for restructuring the banking system and the complementary policies needed for economic recovery.



For a roundup and summary of the Institute's events, visit [Events at IFI](#)

You can find all previous issues of our newsletter [issues here](#)



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