

War & Peace

in the 21st century

The future of the Middle East: understanding conflict, building peace

Palau de Pedralbes, Barcelona
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CIDOB

BARCELONA
CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

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The future of the Middle East: understanding conflict, building peace

The Middle East is one of the most complex regions in the world. It has recently entered a new wave of conflict, characterised by unprecedented level of violence. About a year and a half after Hamas' terrorist attacks and Israel's disproportionate response, which has caused more than 50,000 deaths and a serious humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the conflict spread into Lebanon and the prospects for regional escalation became a real danger. Syria has put an end to the Assad regime but, at the same time, entered a new era of uncertainty. The escalation of violence in current circumstances has lasted longer than previous waves of the Arab-Israeli conflict and has involved more actors, both regional and international. The authority of the United States in the region, under a new Trump Administration is questioned, while the European Union looks increasingly weak and divided. The United Nations, paralysed by an ineffective Security Council, is also unable to promote peace, and the countries of the Global South observe with resentment the double standards of the West, when compared to other conflicts such as the war in Ukraine. Which are the roots of conflict in Middle East? Why is so hard to secure peace? How can the international community promote dialogue and solutions to a lasting peace? What parameters need to be discussed at times of political change in Washington and Brussels? What role should regional and international actors play? Which future scenarios for the Middle East can be envisaged after the current crisis?

09:30 **Opening**

Jaume Collboni, Mayor of Barcelona

09:45 **Introduction**

Josep Borrell, Chairman of the Board, CIDOB

10:00 **The Middle East at a crossroads: understanding the roots of conflict**

A discussion between:

Avi Gil, former Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel

Omar Shaban, Founder and Director, PalThink for Strategic Studies

Salam Kawakibi, Director, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies

Mirette F. Mabrouk, Senior Fellow and Founding Director of the Egypt and the Horn of Africa Program, Middle East Institute

Chaired and moderated by:

Ángeles Espinosa, Journalist, former Middle East Correspondent, EL PAÍS

Followed by a debate between the speakers

11:15 **Coffee break**

11:45 **The international dimension and its contribution to a lasting peace**

A discussion between:

Merissa Khurma, Director, Middle East Program, Wilson Center

Mohanad Hage Ali, Deputy Director for Research, Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center

Sanam Vakil, Director, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House

Gérard Araud, Distinguished Fellow, Europe Center, Atlantic Council

Chaired and moderated by:

Natalia Sancha, Journalist and Political Analyst; former Political Advisor to the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Process

Followed by a debate between the speakers

13:00 **Debate with the audience**

13:30 **Concluding Remarks**

PoI Morillas, Director, CIDOB

13:45 **Closing**

Jaume Duch, Minister for European Union and Foreign Action, Government of Catalonia

Working language: English

#WP2025