



United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)

2022 FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

*“Countering racism and discrimination:
the nexus to building pluralistic and diverse societies”*

**Participants from Europe and North America (EUNA)
and
the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**

The Network
for Religious
& Traditional
Peacemakers



*The 2022 edition of the Fellowship Programme is organized with
support of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers.*



Ahmed Pasha Windi (Iraq) is a human rights activist and development practitioner focused on peacebuilding, social cohesion, freedom of religion/belief, and gender equality. Ahmed speaks four languages (Arabic, English, Kurdish, and Spanish) and has eight years of professional experience in youth development projects with national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), news agencies, and nonprofit training centers. He currently works as a project field coordinator with Pax for Peace International, working on the Musawat program, promoting Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) in Iraq, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The program focuses on countering different pillars of discrimination, building social cohesion, promoting dialogue, and building trust among different communities of the three countries. Ahmed promotes traveling and exploring other countries and cultures, and continuously highlights the benefits of travel professionally and personally.



Ali Kifah Mahmoud (Lebanon) is a youth trainer and an activist in the fields of inter-faith dialogue, youth, peace and nonviolent communication. He believes that “we rise by lifting each other”, hence empowering others is his driving force. Although his background is in finance, he followed his passion and shifted to peacebuilding. This move inspires him to keep encouraging others, especially youth, to follow their dreams. Ali is part of several local and international networks focused on peace, dialogue, youth and other related topics, including Adyan Foundation, Forum of Development Culture and Dialogue FDCD, GIZ, Aiserve Foundation, Forum ZFD, and Interfaith Dialogue on Violent Extremism – iDove. The current times of hardship in Lebanon as well as in the world, pushes him to contribute to a positive change in his community and the wider society.



Bistra Ivanova (Bulgaria) is a migrant integration expert, researcher and social entrepreneur. She is co-founder and chairperson of one of Bulgaria’s leading not-for-profit organizations, Multi Kulti Collective, which focuses on supporting migrant integration and promoting diversity and human rights. The organization has received numerous awards and recognitions on the national and European levels. Bistra’s academic background in Communications has enabled her to develop and lead two nation-wide media campaigns on diversity and anti-discrimination. She has been the country coordinator of the official EU portal on migrant integration EWSI since 2015. Since 2016, she has been the leading Bulgarian researcher in the most significant EU project on refugee integration, the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism NIEM. Bistra was awarded Volunteer of the Year (2011), Darik’s 40 under 40 (2014), and WEF’s Global Shaper (2014) and featured in the book “30 People who Change Bulgaria” (2019).



Dalia Grinfeld (Germany) is a political activist dedicated to fighting for justice and equality at national and European levels. Through advocacy, education, public speaking, and writing, she is a resolute and effective champion in the fight against rising antisemitism and hate. She brings this energy to her position as Assistant Director of European Affairs at the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) where she leads programs and supports Jewish communities in their advocacy efforts, especially in coalition building. One focus area of hers is incorporating anti-discrimination and diversity work in corporate cultures. She is also a permanent member of the Berlin Senate's expert circle on antisemitism and a jury member to review grant applications to multiple large German foundations. For more than a decade, Dalia has been active in volunteer leadership positions which allowed her to lead effective campaigns e.g., against Germany's far-right political party, advocate for other minorities, fundraise over 400.000€ annually, and empower over 150 volunteers.



Elaf Omair (Saudi Arabia) is a female leader from Saudi Arabia passionate about social change through intercultural dialogue and policy reform. Professionally, Elaf worked in human capital management, policy research and analysis, and capacity development. She earned two Master's degrees in the United States, in Policy Management and in Global Thought. Elaf was selected by the US Department of State to participate in an intercultural exchange scholarship about religious pluralism in the US. She also received the MiSK Fellowship in Saudi Arabia to be a mentor to young Saudi leaders. As an academic, Elaf tackled research topics in counterterrorism, radicalization, hate speech, education and labor policy, gender, peacebuilding, gun violence, and change management. Elaf returned to Saudi Arabia in 2022 to reconnect with her roots and embark on her most important journey yet; a global change agent supporting youth around the world by promoting pluralism and diversity.



Fatima Al Shamasi (Bahrain) is an educator and peacebuilder, dedicated to serving and learning where possible. At the age of 18 she volunteered in Heilongjiang, China in a cultural exchange program to teach middle school students English. At 19, she volunteered with the Union of Relief and Development Associations in Lebanon to support Syrian refugees. Fatima finished her degree in Liberal Arts, focusing on Philosophy and Politics. At 21, she became a teacher - and later an extracurricular activities coordinator that empowers and guides students from different age groups to become global and open-minded citizens. She has also coordinated and executed one of the biggest Model United Nations conferences in Bahrain with over 400 attendees, enabling students to better understand issues that plague our society at large, and empowering them to become peacemakers and future leaders.



Hamza Saidi (Morocco) is a project coordinator at KAS-REMENA with a Master's degree in sociolinguistics. He is a street photographer by passion, a former folktale storyteller and an outdoor educator. During his role as a program leader with "Rustic Pathways", his primary focus was on immersing international students in Moroccan/MENA culture, values and diversity to equip these future leaders with an open mindset to understand what it means to be an Arab/Amazigh/Muslim. Hamza is a strong believer in the role cultural mediation can play as a track 3 diplomacy tool. In his current position, Hamza works on establishing dialogue between young activists and experts with senior stakeholders in Morocco and across the MENA region, on topics related to transboundary water issues and climate threats. He strives to bring together people from across the MENA and EU to work beyond political/religious interests which can lead to conflict and focus on cooperation and empathy instead.



Hiba Boujnah (Tunisia) is a public health expert who thrives on building and sustaining human connections based on mutual understanding and respect of the different cultures and identities while focusing on what unites individuals. Hiba received the Fulbright scholarship to study in the US where she earned her Master's degree in Public Health and started her international career with a focus on the African continent. She has experience working with the Tunisian and American governments, INGOs as well as WHO. Currently she serves at the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention focusing on Global Health Diplomacy. Hiba has a genuine interest in issues of racism, colonialism, patriarchy and other oppressive systems. Through her work during disease outbreaks and pandemics, she has come to realize that these systems that propagate stigma and discrimination greatly hinder the overall health and well-being of humans everywhere. Therefore, Hiba aims to tackle these issues holistically starting from a cultural standpoint.



Javad Mushtaq (Norway) is a recognized social entrepreneur, systems leader and diversity, equity and inclusion pioneer, who has over the last decade played a pivotal role in advancing and progressing the state of ethnic and racial equity and inclusion in Norway. He is the founder and CEO of MAK, Norway's leading organization working on systems change to improve and accelerate the progression on racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion. His groundbreaking work includes collaborative initiatives like the national #TakeAction campaign reaching 2.5 million people in light of the BLM movement, and the CEO Commitment for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Nordics, mobilizing organizations and businesses to commit and progress their state on ethnic and gender equity and inclusion. Javad is also the CEO of JM Ventures, Norway's first impact investment and advisory firm with a diversity lens, and is the deputy managing director of EAT Foundation, working with food, health, sustainability and social justice.



Jedrzej Nowe (Poland) is passionate about peace education and youth development, particularly valuing interactions and efforts at the community level, working for and with people. He has worked with youth on topics including conflict transformation, intercultural dialogue, peace building through arts and sports, permaculture and environmentalism in Madagascar, Tunisia, Israel and Palestine, the United States and Poland. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology with focus on Cross-Cultural Psychology and a Master's degree in Negotiation and Conflict Resolution. He is particularly interested in combining the fields of social psychology, conflict transformation, systems thinking and complexity to understand drivers, patterns, dynamics and behaviors behind interpersonal and inter group conflicts, and how to navigate those towards peace. In his professional career he has worked for local, national and international entities, focusing on a range of issues from peace building and conflict prevention, human security, peace education, and humanitarian leadership.



Joseph Briefel (United Kingdom) is the Director of Integrity UK, a 'think-and-do' tank that seeks to challenge hate and empower communities across the UK, Western Balkans, and the Middle East and North Africa. Joseph holds a Master's degree in International Relations and a Bachelor's degree in Modern Languages. A speaker of nine languages, Joseph has led a number of national initiatives across the UK aimed at strengthening civil society, empowering communities to challenge hate and racism, in particular from the far-right, and establishing programmes aimed at countering disinformation online. Beyond the UK, Joseph has worked on a number of programmes related to post-conflict reconciliation, peacebuilding and promoting the freedom of religion or belief in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq and Lebanon, and has been consulted by various international and multilateral agencies, as well as government departments across the world.



Melody Ma (Canada) is a culture activist, op-ed writer, and tech startup founder. She led the #SaveChinatownYVR campaign to advocate for the cultural conservation of Vancouver's historic Chinatown and her advocacy work was featured by The Economist. She served on the Arts and Culture Policy Council for the City of Vancouver where she advocated for cultural sustainability policy. Melody writes about cultural and civic issues and her op-eds have appeared in many local, national and international media outlets. Melody currently serves on the board of Vancouver Public Library and has served in various governance capacities to cultural institutions such as Pi Theatre and Ballet BC. She is also the co-founder of Podyssey Podcasts, an online community of podcast lovers. In recognition of her community and advocacy work, Melody was featured as a local changemaker on the cover of Georgia Straight for 2017's International Women's Day and Flare Magazine's 2018 #HowIMadelt list.



Merihan El-Salakawy (Egypt) is a young professional and a youth leader with an academic background in political science and 4+ years of experience in the field of migration, post conflict reconstruction and social development, especially in the context of Africa. As a project coordinator at Goethe Institute in Cairo, she led the implementation of a groundbreaking social innovation, capacity building programs for 22 social startups for which she was subsequently awarded the Biggest Social Impact Award by the Global Entrepreneurship Network. As Project Assistant at Caritas, she organized the first Refugees Youth Forum which empowered young refugees and enhanced their inclusion and coexistence in their host communities. She is also the founder of “Politica”, the first and unique political club at Alexandria University with around 3,400 student members.



Selorm Quist (United States) is an international relations practitioner and lifelong educator who focuses on racism, diversity, and the African diaspora. A native of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and the child of West African immigrants, Selorm has experienced firsthand the rewards and challenges of pluralistic societies and identities. She earned her Bachelor’s degree in Sociology, earning the Jay Rumney Memorial Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement. Selorm recently completed her Master’s degree in International Affairs, during which she conducted research on racial identity development among Ghanaian immigrants to the United States and intragroup skin tone discrimination, or colorism, within transnational Black communities. In line with this substantive interest and her commitment to equity within multicolored communities, she served as an intern this year for the global social initiative Colorism Healing.