

Female leadership in Bahrain: Progress, potential, and sustainability

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

11:00am- 12:00 pm ET/ 6:00 – 7:00 pm AST

Hybrid: FinTech Bay and Zoom Webinar

Opening Remarks



Amjad Ahmad

Chairman, empowerME, Atlantic Council

Amjad Ahmad is chairman of empowerME at the Atlantic Council. EmpowerME focuses on shaping innovative investments to empower entrepreneurs, women, and the private sector in the Middle East. EmpowerME also develops strategies and policies to drive sustainable prosperity through the creation of dynamic entrepreneurial economies, the economic participation of women, the integration of regional economies, and educational transformation. Amjad is also managing partner of the venture capital firm Precinct Partners and serves on the boards of Homzmart, Tapal Tea, RSA Global, Mr. Usta, and The Luxury Closet. He was recently appointed to the board of Amideast, a leading US nonprofit organization engaged in international education, training, and development activities in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as building cross-cultural understanding between the United States and the region. Based in the United Arab Emirates for fifteen years prior to moving to Washington, DC, Amjad has collaborated with business leaders and entrepreneurs to build leading companies in the Middle East. Through his work as a venture capital and growth investor, Amjad established two investment firms in the region that provided over \$1 billion in funding to over fifty companies in sectors ranging from technology and education to healthcare and finance. During the past five years, Amjad has focused his investments on entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology. Amjad holds a master's degree in international affairs with a concentration in international finance and economics from Columbia University and is a graduate of the general management program at Harvard Business School.

Keynote remarks



H.E. Shaikh Abdullah bin Rashid Al Khalifa

Ambassador, Embassy of The Kingdom of Bahrain

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa issued Royal Decree No. 34/2017 appointing Shaikh Abdulla bin Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa as the ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United States of America. Shaikh Abdulla obtained his bachelor's degree from Bentley University. He continued his studies at the same university and received a master's in business administration. Shaikh Abdulla attained a certificate from the Harvard Kennedy School focusing on "Innovation in Governance" as part of his executive education program. He is currently pursuing a PhD at the International School of Management based in Paris. Shaikh Abdulla's post-graduate career started at the Royal Court where he worked and oversaw educational, medical, and social affairs. He then joined the General Organization for Youth and Sports as the Director of Planning and Follow-up and was later appointed Director of Financial and Human Resources. In 2010, he was appointed as Governor of the Southern Governorate of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the largest in size and with the highest potential for development. As part of a collaborative effort between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the US, Shaikh Abdulla launched a partnership between the Governorate and the American non-profit organization D.A.R.E. to develop and deploy an anti-violence and anti-addiction program delivered by trained community police officers in local elementary and secondary schools. The initiative

would later transform into a national program sponsored by the Kingdom's National Anti-Drug Committee, on which Shaikh Abdulla serves. Shaikh Abdulla played an active role in drafting the National Anti-Drug Strategy in conjunction with the regional office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which was launched in 2016. He served as a member of the Bahrain Olympic Committee from 2008 and as the treasurer until 2017. When he served as vice president of the Bahrain Olympic Shooting Federation, Shaikh Abdulla formulated the first women's shooting team, competing in the different disciplines locally and internationally. In 2007, he gained continental support to be elected vice president of the Asian Shooting Confederation. The Bahrain Weightlifting and Bodybuilding Association was another entity that Shaikh Abdulla chaired until his recent appointment. He, once again, gained continental and international support to earn posts as the president of the Asian Bodybuilding Federation and the vice president of the International Federation for Bodybuilding and Fitness. In 2016, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa granted Shaikh Abdulla bin Rashed Al Khalifa an Honorary Distinction Award recognizing his gubernatorial achievements and contributions. In Oct. 2019 he received the 2019 Stevie Award for the personality of the year category, for his role in the founding and development of the of the Maan "Together" program against violence and addiction.



David P. Brownstein

Deputy Chief Of Mission, U.S. Embassy of Manama

David Brownstein began serving as Deputy Chief of Mission at U.S. Embassy Manama in August, 2022. From October 2020 to October 2021, he served as the Senior Representative for Northeast Syria, prior to which he was the Office Director for Near Eastern Affairs within the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. He served as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires at U.S. Embassy Bangui from 2017 to 2019. Previous assignments with the Department of State include Political and Economic Counselor at U.S. Embassy Yaoundé (2015-2017), Deputy Coordinator and instructor for the Foreign Service Officer Orientation Course (A-100) at the Foreign Service Institute (2012-2014), National Intelligence University/Defense Intelligence Agency (2011-2012), Staff Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs (2010-2011), Consular Officer in Baghdad, Iraq (2009-2010), and Political Officer in Rabat, Morocco (2007-2009). David served as a Combat Engineer and Cryptolinguist in the US Army and worked in the development field in eastern and southern Africa and the United States for six years. Before that he processed fish in the Bering Sea. David attended Williams College and National Intelligence University. David is the recipient of multiple State Department awards, and the 2019 Richard T Ellis Award for Excellence in Interagency Collaboration. He speaks French and Arabic. He is married to Kristyna Bishop, and they are the proud parents of a daughter. Although a proud native New Yorker and Mets fan, he also now calls Vermont home.

Panelsits



Jordana Semaan

Head of HR for Gulf and Asia and the Global Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Investcorp

Jordana Semaan oversees the Human Resources operation for Investcorp's offices in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Singapore, China, Japan and India. In her role as Global Head of DEI she looks at all initiatives and programs that support the firm's DEI mission and strategy. Jordana joined Investcorp in 2019. Mrs. Semaan is an HR professional whose career has spanned the last 19 years encompassing working in different fields and markets that has allowed her to develop both her leadership style as well as have a multi skill set when it comes to work. Mrs. Semaan holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the New York Institute of Technology and a Masters Degree in Human Capital Management from Columbia University, she is also CIPD certified.



Nidal Al-Basha

Head of Public Sector Innovation, Amazon Web Services MENA Region

Nidal AlBasha is the Head of Public Sector Innovation at AWS MEA, a PHD candidate in Innovation with two Master Degrees, one on Innovation Research and one MBA in Entrepreneurship, as well as being a Certified Chief Innovation Officer. Nidal is currently holding the position of the Leader of the Cloud Innovation Centers in Bahrain. Before joining AWS, Nidal was the Chief Digital Officer at Microsoft in Saudi Arabia, and before that period, he spent time managing Saudi Arabia's e-Government Portal and Channels beside being a CEO of 2 startups earlier.



Hollie Griego

Director, North America Head of Strategy and Platforms, Citi Global Wealth Investments

Hollie Griego is the North America Head of Strategy and Platforms for Citi Global Wealth Investments. In this role she is responsible for designing, developing, and implementing strategies to support the needs of Investment clients. Hollie was previously responsible for the development and execution of the global Foreign Exchange institutional client strategy. In this role she drove key strategic priorities and initiatives focused on delivering a positive client experience. Hollie has held several other roles within Foreign Exchange including Global Head of Portfolio Sales and North America Head of Bank Sales. Prior to joining Citi, Hollie was at Deutsche Bank as an Analyst and Associate in Fixed Income and Cross Markets Arbitrage. Hollie earned a BA in Modern Languages from Trinity College. She has lived in 10 countries around the world, mainly in Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. She speaks 3 languages and is raising her twins to be trilingual.

**Marwa Al Saad**

Managing Director, Human Capital, Mumtalakat Bahrain

Marwa Al Saad joined Mumtalakat in 2019 as the head of the firm's Human Capital function. In this capacity, she also plays a role in supporting Mumtalakat's portfolio companies on their various talent initiatives. Marwa brings over 15 years of experience in talent management and development across diverse sectors. Her expertise extends to renowned Fortune 500 companies, such as General Mills USA and Cummins Power Generation, as well as government-owned entities like Tatweer Petroleum and the pan-Arab family office, YBA Kanoo where she led the group's HR function across multiple regions. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Bahrain Development Bank (BDB) and on the Board of Directors of the Bahrain Real Estate Investment Company (Edamah) where she also chairs the nomination and remuneration committees for both entities. Marwa holds a Masters Degree in Human Resources Management from Purdue University, Krannert School of Management, USA.

Moderated by**Suzy Al Zeerah**

Chief Operating Officer, Bahrain FinTech Bay

Suzy has a background in education and marketing. After earning her Masters in Business Management from Regents University in London, she spent 14 years working in higher education in Damascus, Syria. In 2011, she joined the faculty at the American University of Science and Technology in Beirut. Suzy's passion for triathlon led her to join the management of the Bahrain and Dubai IRONMAN 70.3 Middle East Championships as the Head of Marketing and Communications. She is a certified technical official with the International Triathlon Union. Prior to this role, she was the Head of Marketing for Brinc Batelco IoT Hub, an accelerator for IoT hardware based in Bahrain. In addition to her professional role, Suzy is actively involved in the community. She is Co-Founder of Pace Bahrain, a sports management company that has organized many local races in Bahrain. She serves as Treasurer of the board for the Bahrain Gymnastics Federation. Suzy is also a member of several advisory boards including WOMEN IN TECH - Bahrain Chapter and the Curriculum Advisory Committee for both University of Bahrain's College of Business Administration and Bahrain Polytechnic.