



10–11 June 2026

OSLOFORUM

The cost of war,
the price of peace



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



Centre for
Humanitarian
Dialogue

OSLO FORUM

The cost of war,
the price of peace

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The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) is a private diplomacy organisation founded on the principles of humanity, impartiality and independence. Its mission is to help prevent, mitigate and resolve armed conflict through dialogue and mediation.

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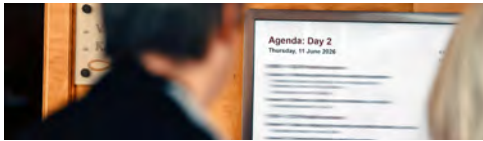
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Contents



4

Agenda overview

2026 report

6



39

**Out now:
Engaging Criminal
Armed Groups**

**From The Mediator's
Studio**

40



48

Participants

**The Oslo Forum
Team**

60



Agenda overview

10		Wednesday	
		June 2026	
09:00 – 10:45		Opening plenary	
09:00 – 09:45		High-level opening conversation: The cost of war, the price of peace	
09:45 – 10:45		High-level discussions: Mediating a Middle East in turmoil	
11:15 – 12:30		Session 1	Session 2
Parallel sessions:		Power vs ownership: who holds the deal under pressure?	Europe: what's next?
			New opportunities for peace in North Africa
12:30 – 14:00		Informal buffet lunch	
14:00 – 15:15		Session 1	Session 2
Parallel sessions:		Peacemaking in unsettled Latin America	Lebanon: fragile balancing act
15:45 – 16:30		High-level conversation with Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa Al Harthy and Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik	
17:00 – 18:15		Session 1	Session 2
Parallel sessions:		Eastern Congo: minerals, mediation, and the making of peace	Israel: endless wars or durable compromise?
18:45 – 19:45		The Mediator's Studio	

11

Thursday
June 202609:00 – 10:30
Parallel
sessions:

Session 1

**Rethinking West African
security cooperation**

Session 2

Myanmar:
faultlines and frontlines11:00 – 12:15
Parallel
sessions:

Session 1

Sudan: bridging the security
and political tracks

Session 2

**Governing Palestine
under Occupation**

12:15 – 14:15

Informal buffet lunch14:30 – 15:45
Parallel
sessions:

Session 1

**Mediating maritime
chokepoints**

Session 2

**Can the middle
find its mojo?**16:15 – 17:30
Parallel
sessions:

Session 1

**Countering
“hostage diplomacy”**

Session 2

**Regional wars,
nuclear risks**

2026 Oslo Forum report

As global conflicts expand and geopolitical tensions intensify, the twenty-third edition of the Oslo Forum took place on 10 and 11 June 2026 and brought together 140 senior mediators, policymakers, diplomats and peace practitioners from more than 50 countries. Convened by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), the Forum once again provided a discreet setting for the world's leading peacemakers to exchange insights, explore new ideas, and reaffirm their commitment to preventing and resolving armed conflict.



Espen Barth Eide and Majed Al-Ansari

Distinguished participants

- **Tarek Mitri**, Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon
- **Karamoko Jean Marie Traoré**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso
- **Abdoulaye Diop**, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali
- **Ghassan Salamé**, Minister of Culture of Lebanon
- **Mustapha Ahmed Noman**, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Yemen
- **Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa Al Harthy**, Undersecretary for Political Affairs, Foreign Ministry of Oman
- **Enrique Ochoa**, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
- **Cheunboran Chanborey**, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia
- **Majed Al-Ansari**, Advisor to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar
- **Manal Radwan**, Special Envoy and Advisor of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia for Negotiations and Peace Efforts
- **Jonathan Powell**, National Security Adviser to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
- **Massad Boulos**, Senior Advisor to the president of the United States of America
- **Zhai Jun**, Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on the Middle East Issue
- **Syed Imdad Hussain Shah**, Commander of 30 Corps of the Pakistan Army
- **Arsenio Dominguez**, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization

The mood was sober as participants reflected on a world marked by escalating violence: from mounting tensions across the Middle East to continuing wars in Ukraine, Sudan and Myanmar, alongside a host of other unresolved conflicts. Against this backdrop, the theme of the 2026 Oslo Forum – *The cost of war, the price of peace* – had particular resonance. It was a reminder throughout the discussions that the costs of armed conflict continue to rise while the dividends of successful peacemaking remain immense.

Top left: David Gorman and Espen Barth Eide. Centre left: Zhai Jun. Bottom left: Hanna Tetteh and Ummu Kalthum Rabi'u. Top right: Hilde Haraldstad and Staffan de Mistura. Centre right: Yusuf Maitama Tuggar. Bottom right: David Harland







Top left: Laura Gil. Bottom left: Wadah Khanfar and Alp Ay. Top right: Stine Lehmann-Larsen.
Centre: Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete. Centre right: Sarah Nouwen. Bottom right: Romain Grandjean



Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Espen Barth Eide, reminded participants that diplomacy is indispensable in an era marked by protracted wars and intensifying geopolitical competition. As he [noted](#), “Few wars end with the complete victory of one side. The vast majority of wars end at the negotiating table. This is a reminder that diplomacy remains essential.”

The urgency of this message is evident. The number of armed conflicts worldwide remains at its highest since the end of the Second World War, with 65 state-based conflicts recorded across 35 countries in 2025, according to the [Peace Research Institute Oslo](#) and Uppsala University. Particularly striking is the increase in interstate conflicts, which have doubled in number compared to the previous year. The trend points to an erosion of international norms that have long provided guardrails against escalation. Worryingly, wars of aggression have made a comeback in recent years, while mass atrocities appear increasingly normalised in rhetoric and practice.

As Espen Barth Eide said, “A lack of respect for international humanitarian law is unfortunately a defining feature of many of today’s wars and conflicts.



Naz Khatoun Modirzadeh, Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, and Sheikh Khalifa bin Issa Al Harthy

When attacks on civilians, hospitals, and critical infrastructure become part of warfare, international law comes under pressure.” Beyond the immense human toll, conflicts generate regional instability, disrupt global trade and supply chains, undermine economic development, and divert scarce public resources towards military spending – consequences that have been particularly visible in the war involving Iran, Israel, and the United States and its wider repercussions.

Yet the Forum also highlighted a simple but powerful counterpoint: the price of peace is modest compared to the cost of war. While peacemaking requires patience, political courage and sustained investment, negotiated settlements remain the most durable pathway to ending violence and creating the conditions for recovery and development. Throughout the two days, participants explored how diplomacy can adapt to a fragmenting international landscape. Discussions examined how mediators can preserve channels for dialogue, support political compromise and seize opportunities for de-escalation in crisis situations.

HD Executive Director David Harland encapsulated the spirit of the Forum by observing that “As war becomes louder, diplomacy must become more stubborn.” His words captured a conviction that ran through the discussions: that the current international environment does not diminish the need for mediation but makes it more essential than ever. At a time when the human, economic and strategic costs of conflict continue to mount, effective peacemaking is not only a humanitarian imperative but also a sound investment in global stability and security.

The chapters that follow summarise the principal themes and insights that emerged from the Oslo Forum 2026.

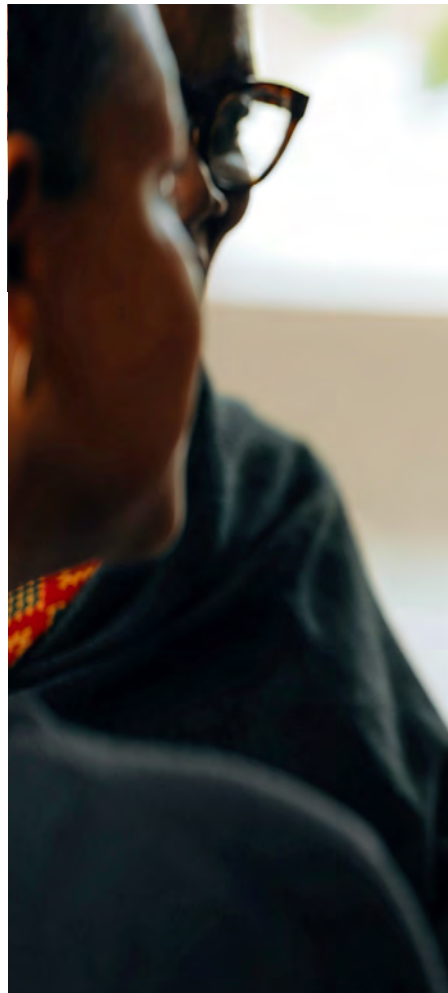
Bespoke mediator coalitions in a fragmented world

One of the clearest trends emerging from the Oslo Forum was the growing prominence of bespoke mediator coalitions. Single mediators, who shepherd a peace process from beginning to end, have become rare. Instead, mediation efforts increasingly bring together states, international organisations and private actors that combine different forms of leverage, legitimacy and expertise.



Top left: Boris Ruge. Centre left: Lyse Doucet. Bottom left: Humaid Ali Al Maani and Annette Weber. Bottom left and right: Karamoko Jean Marie Traore, Lori-Anne Théroux-Bénoni, and Abdoulaye Diop. Top right: Gorka Elejabarrieta and Syed Imdad Hussain Shah







Top left: Lisa Golden and Jonathan Powell. Bottom left: Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Issa Al Harthy and Niels Annen. Centre: Asif Khan. Top right: Massad Boulos. Bottom right: Ummu Kalthum Rabiou

This evolution reflects profound changes in international politics. As geopolitical competition has intensified, multilateral institutions have often been paralysed, while influential regional powers have become more assertive. At the same time, many conflicts have become internationalised, making it impossible to negotiate peace without engaging powerful external actors. Bespoke coalitions therefore represent less a deliberate design choice than a necessary response to a fragmented international order.

They also reflect the fact that many peace processes today are characterised by competing mediation initiatives, allowing conflict parties to forum-shop or play mediators against one another. In some cases, mediators themselves have strategic interests in the conflict and may seek direct material benefits from their engagement. Their leverage may be necessary, but their involvement can blur the distinction between mediator and negotiating party, undermining the impartiality of the process and making it more difficult to sustain the parties' confidence.

Several discussions nevertheless demonstrated that multi-mediator coalitions can combine complementary strengths. In the Western Sahara talks, the United Nations and the United States are working together, combining UN legitimacy with US diplomatic engagement. Speaking in [The Mediator's Studio podcast](#), the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary General for Western Sahara, Staffan de Mistura, argued that successful mediation depends on seizing political moments when coordinated international engagement becomes possible. The current situation in the Western Sahara talks might present such a moment.

The Oslo Forum also shed light on the growing mediation role of regional and middle powers, including Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Türkiye and others. Their engagement reflects a strong interest in preserving an international order based on dialogue rather than confrontation. The value of these states as mediators often lies in their ability to maintain working relationships across rival power centres, even as geopolitical tensions make cooperation between those powers increasingly difficult.

The negotiations between the Colombian government and the Ejército Gaitanista de Colombia (EGC) facilitated by Norway, Qatar, Spain and

Switzerland, offer one example. Participants also highlighted Pakistan's efforts, supported by Türkiye, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to mediate between Iran and the United States.

Sudan illustrates both the promise and the limitations of bespoke coalitions. Participants welcomed efforts by the Quintet – a coalition of the UN, the European Union, the African Union, IGAD and the League of Arab States – to coordinate international diplomacy in support of a political process, citing the meeting of Sudanese civilian leaders in Addis Ababa in early June 2026 as a significant step. Yet discussions also acknowledged that no mediation architecture can, on its own, overcome a lack of political will among the belligerents or reconcile divergent interests among external actors.



Staffan de Mistura and Comfort Ero



Top left: Joanne Liu. Bottom left: Busadee Santipitaks. Top right: Alberto Vollmer, Enrique Ochoa, and Tonje Flatmark Sødal. Bottom right: Karamoko Jean Marie Traore





Top left: Jean Paul Nyirubutama. Centre: Idun Tvedt. Bottom left: Ellie Geranmayeh, Naz Khatoun Modirzadeh, and Katia Papagianni. Top right: Muhammad Anshor and Elisabeth Slattum. Bottom right: Pankaj Saran



Agreements without settlements?

A recurrent theme throughout the Forum was that mediation continues to achieve important results against considerable odds. Mediators often succeed in brokering ceasefires, humanitarian arrangements, prisoner exchanges and other limited agreements that reduce violence, prevent escalation and create space for diplomacy.

Participants nevertheless observed a marked shift in negotiated outcomes and their level of ambition. Comprehensive agreements to resolve conflicts have become rare in recent years. Instead, mediation today produces narrower agreements that aim to contain violence and stabilise immediate crises. Such agreements save lives and create diplomatic space, but they often postpone the fundamental questions at the heart of the conflict and sometimes create new disputes. The frequent references to the “Day After” – a phrase that has become a commonplace in many peace processes – illustrated the point: the central political questions remain unsettled even after agreements have been reached.



Yngvild Berggrav and Jeffrey Feltman

Gaza exemplifies this dilemma. The agreement signed in October 2025 reduced the intensity of the conflict and facilitated hostage and detainee releases. But violence has repeatedly resumed, the humanitarian situation is still extremely dire, and implementation of subsequent phases has stalled, while a political solution remains elusive.

Participants identified similar dynamics elsewhere. In Ukraine, agreements on grain exports, prisoner exchanges and the return of fallen soldiers have provided some relief, but so far without bringing the war closer to resolution. In Myanmar, locally negotiated ceasefires have reduced violence and improved humanitarian conditions in some areas, yet many have proved short-lived and vulnerable to renewed fighting in the absence of a broader political settlement.

Discussions also reflected on the growing prominence of leverage-based diplomacy to bring parties to the negotiating table and compel them to sign an agreement. Participants acknowledged that such pressure is often indispensable, highlighting the role of the United States, China and influential regional powers in many peace efforts. At the same time, they cautioned that agreements negotiated primarily through external pressure are often not sustainable. While leverage can help secure signatures, implementation ultimately depends on the commitment of those expected to carry the agreement forward. Participants also warned that agreements are not inherently beneficial: poorly designed or imposed deals can entrench grievances or lay the ground for renewed conflict.

Another recurring theme was what can be described as “backfilling”. A common pattern is that power-based diplomacy leads to short agreements – often called framework agreements, memoranda of understanding, or X-point plans – that set out broad parameters without spelling out details. These agreements do not mark the conclusion of a process but rather become the starting point for further mediation. Dialogue is needed to negotiate implementation arrangements, resolve disputes over interpretation, manage new crises and gradually fill the political gaps left unaddressed in the initial negotiations.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo illustrates this evolution. Participants pointed to the US-brokered agreement between Rwanda and the DRC as an important diplomatic breakthrough. Yet the agreement itself did not





Top left: Espen Barth Eide and Manal Radwan, Centre: Mohammad Mahfuzur Rahman.
Bottom left: Einar Rystad and Teiji Hayashi. Top right: Tim Enderlin and Nathalie Olijslager-
Jaarsma. Bottom right: Espen Barth Eide and Tarek Mitri



Top left: Ghassan Salamé and Christopher Thornton. Bottom left: Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik and Ellie Geranmayeh. Top right: Roger D. Carstens. Centre: Elisabeth Lothe. Bottom right: Teiji Hayashi



resolve the conflict involving M23. Instead, detailed negotiations between the Congolese government and M23, facilitated by Qatar, have become necessary to translate broad commitments into practical political and security arrangements.

Participants concluded that political leverage may be necessary to secure agreements in today's conflicts, but leverage alone rarely produces durable peace. The challenge is to go beyond short-term deals, stay engaged in the long haul, and use agreements as stepping stones towards broader political settlements.

Mediating transnational conflict risks

Beyond ongoing armed conflicts, the Oslo Forum featured discussions on a range of transnational risks that threaten international peace and security. Nuclear proliferation, disruptions to global maritime trade, artificial intelligence and climate change all transcend national borders and cannot be managed through deterrence or military power alone. Here too, mediation has a role to play.



David Harland and Humaid Ali Al Maani

Participants expressed concern that geopolitical rivalry, weakening arms-control frameworks and increasingly frequent nuclear signalling are eroding decades of progress in reducing nuclear risks. Conflicts in Europe, the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula, as well as uncertainty surrounding traditional military alliances and related security guarantees have prompted debate about nuclear capabilities in exposed countries. Participants stressed that reducing these risks requires restoring channels of communication between nuclear powers, strengthening crisis-management mechanisms and pursuing incremental confidence-building measures even where political relations are strained.

Maritime security was another area where participants saw a role for mediation. Disruptions of maritime trade in the Red Sea and, most recently, in the Strait of Hormuz have demonstrated how regional conflicts affect global trade, energy markets and food security. Maritime chokepoints are not only strategic assets but shared international goods whose disruption carries worldwide humanitarian and economic consequences. Rather than focusing solely on military responses, discussions highlighted the importance of dialogue between coastal states, shipping actors and international organisations to preserve freedom of navigation and resolve maritime disputes. Participants stressed that pragmatic solutions should remain anchored in international law and avoid creating precedents that could undermine the rules governing international waterways elsewhere.

The role of artificial intelligence also came up in discussions. AI is rapidly changing the way conflicts are fought. It influences military decision-making, cyber operations and information environments, while increasing the speed with which crises can escalate. Discussions underlined the urgent need for norms and practical guardrails to reduce risks associated with the military use of AI. Dialogue can play a role here too: helping to build a shared understanding of risks, identify overlapping interests and find practical solutions.

Climate change likewise emerged as both a growing conflict risk and an entry point for diplomacy. As a [Briefing Paper](#) shared with Oslo Forum participants showed, rising temperatures, environmental degradation and resource scarcity increasingly interact with political grievances, weak governance and armed conflict. At the same time, practical cooperation

Top left: Anne-Claire Legendre and Manal Radwan. Bottom left: Guang Cong. Centre: Nazih El Naggary. Top right: Sheikh Shakboot Al Nahyan, Abdoulaye Diop, and Endre Stiansen. Bottom right: Fatima Hodali and Humaid Ali Al Maani





Top left: Olof Skoog and Frédéric Mondoloni. Top right: Julie Bishop and Clancy Rudeforth.
Bottom left and right: Enrique Ochoa, Claire Hajaj, Ellie Geranmayeh





on water management, natural resources, environmental protection and climate adaptation can reduce tensions while building confidence for broader political engagement. Examples ranging from local agreements on natural resource management in Nigeria and the Sahel to dialogue on shared marine ecosystems in the Bay of Bengal demonstrate how environmental cooperation can generate peace dividends.

Participants concluded that mediation has an increasingly important role to play beyond the negotiation of peace agreements. As security risks become more interconnected and transnational, mediators are well placed to facilitate dialogue and develop practical arrangements that mitigate risks and prevent armed conflict.



A world in flux

The Oslo Forum 2026 reflected an international order in flux. Participants repeatedly expressed concern about the erosion of international norms. In this context, they stressed that mediation should seek outcomes consistent with international law, pointing to the limitations of purely transactional approaches, particularly those driven by the narrow material interests of mediating states. As established elements of the international order have come under strain, no clear organising principle has emerged to replace them. On issues ranging from nuclear risk reduction to artificial intelligence and maritime security, discussions at Oslo therefore raised difficult questions with few ready-made answers.



Despite these concerns, the Forum conveyed a sense that progress remains possible. The diversity and vibrancy of the mediation community, and its willingness to tackle new issues, were themselves a reminder of a continued commitment to peacemaking. In a more fragmented and uncertain world, pathways to peace are increasingly difficult to navigate. But creativity, sustained engagement and investment in diplomacy can help find and forge new ones.

Author



David Lanz

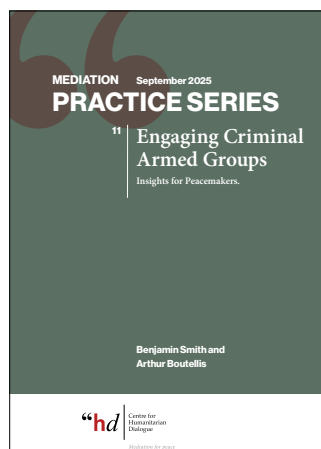
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Edited by **Huongly Buiduong**, Project Officer, Mediation Support and Policy Unit, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)

Out now: Engaging Criminal Armed Groups

How can peacemakers effectively enter into dialogue with criminal armed groups?

Criminal armed groups (CAGs) drive instability and violence, fill governance vacuums, and can both undermine and shape peace processes. Yet many practitioners remain hesitant to engage with them, constrained by stigma, legal risks, and the perceived divide between “political” and “criminal” armed actors. This often leads to missed opportunities for peacemaking.



This publication, co-authored by Benjamin Smith and Arthur Boutellis, challenges that binary by showing how established mediation practices can be adapted to address organised criminal violence. Drawing on HD's operational experience, case studies, and interviews with practitioners – including former members of CAGs – it offers practical guidance on whether, when, and how to approach such actors. It demonstrates that, under the right circumstances, this can complement security and justice efforts.



Scan the QR code to get access to your free copy.

From The Mediator's Studio



The Mediator's Studio is a podcast on peacemaking, inspired by the Forum's interview series of the same name. Hosted by Adam Cooper, Director of Digital Conflict at the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), the show brings together mediators, diplomats, armed group representatives, and other peace actors. Across seven seasons, guests share behind-the-scenes insights into what it takes to end conflict.

In the latest season, our guests included Dr Majed Al-Ansari, Advisor to the Prime Minister and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Dr Majed Al-Ansari. Photo: Courtesy of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar

of Qatar. The following is an excerpt drawn from an episode recorded at the Muscat Mediation Retreat in November 2025.

Since then, tensions involving the United States, Israel, and Iran have escalated across the Gulf and wider Middle East. While this conversation predates these developments and reflects the situation at the time, its core themes remain relevant – particularly the importance of dialogue and maintaining communication even in moments of deep conflict.

Mediating under fire

From Gaza to the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Russia-Ukraine war, Qatar has been involved in some of today's most complex mediation efforts. As Advisor to the Prime Minister, Dr Majed Al-Ansari has worked at the heart of these processes, where dialogue can often seem impossible. He is the founder and president of the Doha-based Center for International Policy Research (CIPR), focusing on conflict analysis and Track Two diplomacy. In this interview, he reflects candidly on what it takes to bring adversaries back into the same room – even when violence has claimed their loved ones – and why lasting peace requires confronting that pain rather than avoiding it. Above all, he underscores the importance of listening to those on the ground, reminding us that effective mediation is shaped as much by human connection as by formal diplomacy. The episode opens with host Adam Cooper asking Dr Majed Al-Ansari about the motivations behind Qatar's role as a mediator in many conflicts.

Dr Majed Al-Ansari: Qatar is a small country. We have a population of just shy of 3 million. We are the main benefactors of an international rule-based order. We are the benefactors of the international system. We are the benefactors for the rules that are against aggression by large on small. And this is why we have a vested interest in protecting the world from conflict, protecting the world from the decay of the international system. And if you look at our economic model, it's based on our ability to trade overseas, our ability for our shipments to move from Doha to as far as Japan – East, and the United States – West, so spanning the whole world. And that cannot happen if you don't have peace and prosperity around the world. Our clients around the world need their own prosperity

in order to be our clients. But it is also the maritime routes that need to be protected. And that can only happen in an environment where powers like Qatar are conducive of peace, and they know how to work with every partner in the world to reach that result. Especially that there is a gap in the international markets today for countries who are ready to spend political capital on peace.

“There is a gap in the international markets today for countries who are ready to spend political capital on peace.”

Adam Cooper: Let's move on to your mediation between Hamas and Israel . . . The moment I want to ask you about first is the afternoon of 9th of September [2025] when Israeli fighter jets attack the compound in Doha where you're hosting Hamas. They miss the top leaders, they kill five people associated with the Hamas Delegation and they kill a Qatari security officer. Making this the first time in your history that you lose a serving officer in an attack on your territory by a foreign power. Where are you when Israel attacks and what's going through your mind?

Dr Majed Al-Ansari: A day before that attack happens, we were with the Prime Minister, engaged in a day long talks with the parties. You know, the night before we've just ended a very long meeting with the Hamas Delegation in Doha. We've given them the proposal, we pressed as much as possible that we need an answer by Friday. And the Prime Minister was doing the calls all night to make sure that all the parties, including Israel by the way, understand exactly what is happening between Tuesday and Friday. Wednesday morning, obviously we were busy seeing all the options and looking at everything. And as I was going home, just arriving at my house, I start hearing the bombs and hearing the explosion that sounded like they were next door, although I was at least 15 minutes drive away from the bomb site. And to be honest, I immediately thought, this has to be an Israeli attack. Because if you were there, if you were listening to the explosions, this could never be anything else. We've lived through the Iranian missile attacks, for example. We've heard explosions that happens because of safety issues. This sounded nothing like that.

And the number of these rockets coming in. And of course, my first concern was that my daughter who was in university, where she just started there that year, and the neighbourhood that was bombed was smack in the middle between my house and the university. And I imagine how many families in Qatar had the same feeling at the time where their loved ones were, when you didn't know the extent of the Israeli bombing. Actually, most people in Qatar did not know that it was an Israeli bombing at that time. So, you can imagine the confusion, the sense of fear, the sense of insecurity at that moment in a country that has prided itself on being secure and safe and prosperous for more than 180 nationalities living in it for so many decades. And therefore, it is not an easy moment to live through, especially when you are a diplomat that is engaged in talks with the party that just bombed your country.

“In most of the mediations we are doing, there are a million elements, but one very important is to make sure that the protagonists don't look bad.”

Adam Cooper: I can hear the emotion in your voice, just how incredibly, when you're used to that safety and security, how disruptive it must have been and how traumatic, in a sense. What did the surviving Hamas officials say to you? There must have been a lot of explaining to do.

Dr Majed Al-Ansari: As you know, none of the negotiating team were killed in the attack. The wife and son of the lead negotiator were harmed, the son was killed and his wife was badly injured. A number of clerical officers were also killed and obviously the 22-year-old Qatari officer was killed in the attack. I think the first thing that happened was that I drove straight to the Prime Minister's office where he had come back and we were reassembled, thinking of what to do next. Our concern at the time was not what are we going to say to Hamas, what is Hamas going to say to us, what are we going to say to Israelis and what the Israelis are going to say to us. The main concern was this is not a threat, but an attack on our national sovereignty. How shall we respond? And that night until 1am we spent every waking moment in the Prime Minister's office working with the whole government in setting the table for everything that we are

going to do, including legal action that we are going to take against our aggressors, including diplomatic initiatives with the Americans and with the Arab and Islamic countries, including security measures that were taken during that day.

... I do think that while the attack on the 9th of September wasn't the biggest when it comes to human lives lost and an attack since 2023, but it was the most significant when it comes to a red line being crossed. An ally of the United States, a mediating country, during an active mediation, being bombed by a country that is seen as another ally of the West and the United States that is supposed to be a member of the international community and signatory to all international conventions and statutes. And it finds itself in a position where it basically just bombs a safe country just because it's politically pungent for the leadership to do so. And therefore, I think, for us, we wanted to show two things. One, if Benjamin Netanyahu wanted this attack to kill the prospects of a deal to end the war in Gaza, then we would double down. And if it was aimed at Qatar to end our role as a mediator, we would also double down ... We immediately, right after the attack, we continued with the talks.



"Doha Agreement on Disarmament and Peace" between Colombia and the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia in Doha, with Mohammed Al Khulaifi, Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, and Tim Enderlin present. Photo credit: Qatar Tribune

Adam Cooper: It sounds almost like a spirit of defiance to uphold your mediation no matter what, and even under literal attack. You've spoken just now about the need to make sure that those negotiations continue, that those delegations feel safe. Once you had spoken to the Americans about the pressure that they were willing to apply on Israel, how reassured do you think that your Hamas counterparts that were being hosted in your country felt? Tell me about the conversations you were having with them at the time.

Dr Majed Al-Ansari: You are talking in the sense of mediating between Hamas and Israel. You're talking between sides that have been at each other's throats for decades. The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran happened during the mediation. Our Prime Minister said it once that he has stopped giving condolences to the members of the team because every other week, a son, a daughter, a cousin, a father of one of the negotiating team would be killed in Gaza. So, they're not immune to what was happening in Gaza, but they are not also new to the fact that their own security is not guaranteed. We have taken all precautions that all delegations in Doha be protected and be put in secure conditions. But you have to remember the place that was bombed was an official governmental residence known by everybody, including the Israeli delegation. This is not a secret location, because we didn't think that a mediating country needs to hide the mediating parties or the parties that's mediating between while an active mediation was taking place.

It's not like we put them in harm's way, because they were never supposed to be in harm's way as they were negotiating for peace on behalf of their respective peoples. The same would have been said, for example, of the Israeli delegation that stayed at the Ritz-Carlton, we didn't need to put them in a safe location because we never thought that they would be in danger. But in this case, you have an air attack on a residential building that is a governmental residential building, that the other party knew that the meeting was taking place in that location at that time, they knew who was meeting there. So, it wasn't an intelligence operation. But at the end, it was the sense of betrayal and complete lack of trust in a party that, instead of appreciating the fact that most of the hostages that are now back with their families as a result of Qatari mediation, decided to kill Qataris instead.

Adam Cooper: If I try to put myself in the shoes of those who would be caught up in some of those tragic events, even if the Hamas delegation understood their security wasn't assured, as you said, this is a kind of profound violation of the norms of standard international conduct. So how would you describe their kind of emotional state at the time?

“ Unless you come back to the table, unless you are able to exchange views with a party that you believe has killed your loved ones, there will be no end to conflict. ”

Dr Majed Al-Ansari: We've been dealing with them since 2006. Throughout that history, the number of assassinations and the killings and the death and destruction in this file have been unbelievable. I'm sure you heard about the meeting between Steve Witkoff and Khalil al-Hayya, and the first thing they discussed was the loss of their children. I'm a father and it chokes me up to think of any of my children being hospitalised, let alone being bombed to a state where you don't have a body to bury. But this is the reality of everybody that's been living in Gaza since 2023. It's the reality of everybody who lives in armed conflict that does not have any humanitarian guardrails. And anybody who's mediating on behalf of their people, whether it be on either side, has lived through fear, has lived through death and destruction, has lived through anger in a way that should not allow them to talk when mediation happens. But the reality of the situation is, unless you come back to the table, unless you are able to exchange views with a party that you believe has killed your loved ones, there will be no end to conflict.



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Former United States Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, **Roger Carstens**, reflects on years of negotiating the release of dozens of Americans held captive abroad. Drawing on cases involving Russia, Iran, Syria and Venezuela, he offers a rare insider's perspective on the diplomacy behind some of the world's most sensitive hostage negotiations.



Special Envoy and Advisor of the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs for Negotiations and Peace Efforts, **Manal Radwan**, draws on two decades at the centre of Middle East diplomacy, from the Saudi-Iran rapprochement to the international campaign for the recognition of Palestinian statehood.



Former Deputy National Security Advisor of India, **Pankaj Saran**, takes listeners inside more than four decades at the heart of Indian diplomacy. He shares lessons from negotiations that shaped India's relationships with its neighbours, including the landmark India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement and efforts to manage India-China tensions.



Former Middle East and North Africa advisor to French President Emmanuel Macron and now President of the Institut du Monde Arabe, **Anne-Claire Legendre**, takes listeners behind the scenes of some of France's most consequential diplomatic efforts in the Middle East.

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