



OPINION: Sowing regional seeds of hope

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In May, at the historic Château d'Ermenonville outside Paris, something remarkable happened. Dozens of leaders from across the Middle East and North Africa – Israelis, Palestinians, Moroccans, Egyptians, Bahrainis, Jordanians and many others – gathered not to debate borders or assign blame, but to design cross-border solutions to two of the region's most urgent challenges: food and water security.

In a region often framed by division, this was an act of cooperation, trust and hope.

The gathering, co-convened by MENA2050 and other partners, was grounded in a simple but radical idea: that regional resilience in the face of climate change cannot be built without regional cooperation. Over three days of intense roundtables, expert panels and collaborative workshops, participants shared promising models – like Morocco's wind-powered desalination projects, Israel's food rescue systems and Egypt's regenerative agriculture innovations. Out of these exchanges emerged a number of potential collaborative projects aimed at expanding solutions across borders. But even more powerful than the proposals was the spirit in which they were conceived: one of partnership, solidarity and shared destiny.

This is what MENA2050 is about.

Founded by a diverse group of leading figures from across the Middle East and North Africa region, MENA2050 is a homegrown regional organisation committed to building a more stable, prosperous, integrated and cooperative Middle East and North Africa. We are a community of policy entrepreneurs, business leaders, young professionals, climate and tech experts, journalists, and civil society leaders working to transform a region long defined by conflict into one shaped by cooperation and possibility.

We start from the belief that the people of the MENA region – whether in Tel Aviv or Tunis, Beirut or Baghdad – share common challenges: water



insecurity, youth unemployment, fragile food systems and unequal participation across all segments of society. These challenges cannot be solved within national silos. They demand cooperation – cooperation that is practical, courageous and focused on the future. The same applies to countless regional opportunities that need stability and multilateral cooperation in order to materialise.

Our Mission

Our mission is to foster precisely that: cross-border collaboration to address shared challenges. We do this through three main vehicles:

- Unofficial, non-state “Track II” dialogues that bring together regional actors across political divides and help nurture the next generation of regional leaders.
- Working groups that design collaborative solutions in areas like climate resilience, water, food systems, AI and more.
- Public engagement to highlight the voices of those committed to cooperation and progress.

MENA2050 is not only a think tank; it’s a platform for regional changemakers, built by and for the people of the region.

Vision for 2050

We are inspired by a vision of the MENA region in 2050 that is interlinked by clean energy grids and railways, not weapons shipments and proxy conflict. A region where people from across its societies lead joint ventures to tackle water scarcity, fight desertification, and connect their economies to global markets. A region where young people see their neighbours not as enemies, but as partners.

Current Challenges

We are not naïve. We know the obstacles are immense. The war in Gaza, Iran’s destabilising behaviour, deep societal mistrust and political repression continue to weigh heavily on the region. But we also believe that the greater the challenge, the greater the need for creative and determined regional actors to step forward and offer an alternative. That alternative is now more urgent – and more possible – than ever.

A Historic Crossroads



Today, the Middle East stands at a historic crossroads. After nearly two years of tragedy and war that started on 7 October 2023, the region has a chance to achieve a pause in the violence. But more fundamentally, it opens a window to reimagine the region's future. Two competing visions are vying for dominance: one built on militancy, proxy war and fear; the other rooted in cooperation, inclusion and mutual interest.

The Role of the UK

The choice is stark. And it is one the UK, and the government in particular, can help to influence. MENA2050 believes the region's future must be built not only by ending conflict but also by linking peace to prosperity. That means moving quickly towards reconstruction and integration across the region. We can invest in promoting frameworks whose foundations have already been laid, such as the IMEC (the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor) and the I2U2 group (which brings together India, Israel, the UAE and the US). Such initiatives have established the groundwork for a new regional architecture focused on trade, energy and innovation. But these platforms can also be made more inclusive, incorporating not just Israel and the Gulf states, but Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians, and other states choosing a path towards peace.

Recent Gatherings

Our recent Ermenonville gathering showed this is possible. Israelis sat next to Palestinians, and Jordanians brainstormed with Tunisians. Practical solutions emerged not despite our differences, but because we were willing to bring our different strengths to the table. That spirit – of shared responsibility for a shared region – is the only path forward.

The Importance of International Support

This is why the support of international partners like the UK is so important. For decades, Labour Friends of Israel has championed a vision of peace based on coexistence, democracy and mutual recognition. Those values are at the heart of MENA2050's work. We seek not only to promote dialogue but also to build shared systems of resilience. We work to create the regional structures that will make political solutions viable by connecting Palestinians, Israelis, and their neighbours through joint initiatives that serve shared needs.

A Call to Action

To our friends in the Labour Party: we believe your values – solidarity, internationalism and inclusion – have a vital role to play in the Middle East.



At a time when hardliners on all sides seek to entrench divisions, there is a growing community across the region – young, pragmatic and courageous – working for something different. We ask for your support in amplifying these voices and investing in the regional initiatives that can help them succeed.

Conclusion

We are at a turning point now. We have a chance to change the course of history. And history will judge how we acted upon this opportunity: did we rebuild the same structures that brought us here? Or did we seize the moment to forge something new – a Middle East defined not by fragmentation and fear, but by integration and hope? At MENA2050, we are choosing hope. We invite our friends in the UK, and especially those in the Labour party, to join us in building it.

Sign Off

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