




Amsterdam Dialogue 2021





“Through the frank exchange of views among justice activists and peace negotiators, the Amsterdam Dialogue has become one of those “not to be missed” annual meetings. The combination of expertise and diversity of opinion among the participants gives the discussion in Amsterdam a unique and extraordinarily valuable quality.”

- *Kenneth Roth, Executive Director at
Human Rights Watch*

“We continue struggling with our efforts to reconcile the peace and the justice paradigm – one of the most important questions in policy making. Amsterdam Dialogue offers by far the best platform to help us move forward in this conversation.”

- *Christian Wenaweser, Permanent Representative of
Liechtenstein to the United Nations*

“Amsterdam Dialogue discussions dive deep into political conflict-solving, with insightful presentations and analysis contributed by foremost experts. Always a stimulating and enriching experience.”

- *Angela Kane, former UN Under-Secretary-General
& Vice President, International Institute for Peace;
Chairperson of DAG's Board of Directors*

“All of us engaged in trying to prevent or resolve conflict repeat, “No peace without justice.” But how? With justice often the most vexing issue in any peace process, the Amsterdam Dialogue leads the way in providing practical approaches based on real world examples, engaging human rights activists, judicial experts, and mediators in a unique, private forum.”

- *Jeffrey Feltman, Former UN Under-Secretary-General
for Political Affairs*

Amsterdam Dialogue 2021

CONFERENCE REPORT

*High-level conference
on peace & justice*

17 AND 18 MAY 2021



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OVERVIEW

The eleventh edition of the Amsterdam Dialogue took place on 17 and 18 May 2021. Held online for a second successive time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event saw participants join us from their homes and offices around the world for two days of fruitful discussion on peace and justice. Participants explored situations from Afghanistan to Venezuela in panel discussions, which were punctuated by Q&A sessions with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, and the outgoing ICC Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda.

The first day of the Amsterdam Dialogue 2021 opened with a **Keynote Address by Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney**. Assessing how Ireland could advance peace and justice as a United Nations (UN) Security Council member, Minister Coveney drew particular attention to renewed violence between Israel and Palestine, the need for a sustainable resolution to the conflict and the potential role of the international community in achieving one. This was followed by the annual **Q&A session with the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Fatou Bensouda**, moderated by Christian Wenaweser, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the UN. Just weeks before Prosecutor Bensouda would hand over duties to incoming Prosecutor Karim Khan, the discussion offered a valuable opportunity to discuss challenges and achievements during her nine-year tenure. A panel on **Sudan** followed, with Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto and Suliman Baldo discussing the prospects of a successful political transition as well as the continuing challenges the country faces. A performance by Sudanese Sufi and folk musician, Asim Gorashi, brought the session to a fitting close.

Parallel break-out panels on Mozambique and Myanmar were up next on the agenda. While participants on the Mozambique panel, including representatives from Mozambican civil society and the Armed Forces, discussed the complex and increasingly violent insurgency in the north of the country, panellists and guests at the Myanmar session analysed the aftermath of the February 2021 coup d'état. In a lively conversation between the acting Foreign Minister of Myanmar's government in exile, Zin Mar Aung, and civil society representative Sai Sam Kham, participants discussed potential ways forward after the Junta's takeover.

Day One closed with a session on the recent BBC-Netflix series **The Serpent** in which Angela Kane, Chair of DAG's Board of Directors and former UN Under-Secretary General, gave a personal account of her experiences trailing a 1970s serial killer in South-East Asia and the gendered depiction of her character in the popular drama. Participants also took the opportunity to reflect on challenges facing women in the diplomatic world as well as their shared experiences and challenges as female diplomats and peacemakers.



Kenneth Roth

Day Two began with a **Keynote Address by Human Rights Watch's Executive Director Kenneth Roth**, speaking on human rights advocacy during the ongoing pandemic as well as a recent shrinking in civic space at the global level. This was followed by a session on Leadership in peace, justice and human rights with **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet**, moderated by DAG's Director, Ram Manikkalingam. During the Q&A, participants discussed the challenges of transitional justice from a national and international perspective, reflecting on the current Human Rights Chief's personal experiences at both the UN and as former Chilean President. The next panel on **Iraq** featured Iraqi Foreign Minister, Fuad Hussein, and UN Special Representative Jeanine Henniss-Plasschaert. The discussion centred on the future of the democratic process in the build-up to the October 2021 elections, security threats posed by non-state armed actors, economic hardship, and recent outbreaks of popular

discontent in the country. A musical interlude by Sudanese singer Mona Magdi brought the session to a close.

Parallel break-out sessions on Venezuela and Yemen followed. Venezuelan government negotiator Héctor Rodríguez reflected on opportunities and challenges for a negotiated solution to Venezuela's political crisis, as well as looming ICC investigations in the country. Yemen panellists, meanwhile, assessed opportunities to advance the international peace process in the country, offering candid analysis of the prospects for peace as well as the role of international actors in the conflict. The following session on **Afghanistan** featured a member of the Afghan government's negotiation team, Abdul Matin Bek. Building on valuable insights from the ongoing peace negotiations, participants stressed the need for greater international support to the fragile talks. Ahead of the final panel, classical musicians Kevin Zhu (violin) and Rohan de Silva (piano) enthralled the audience with a musical performance, playing pieces by Edward Elgar, Josef Suk and George Gershwin. The final discussion centred on the **Horn of Africa** during which participants, including US Special Envoy to the Horn, Jeffrey Feltman, and Editor of the *Addis Standard*, Tsedale Lemma, assessed the security challenges in the region, with a focus on developments in Ethiopia's Tigray province and on how different international actors, including the Gulf States, could play a more constructive role in the region.



Mona Magdi's band

Amsterdam Dialogue 2021

Agenda

17 & 18 MAY 2021

ONLINE EDITION

MONDAY, 17 MAY 2021

- 13:45 Log in available
- 13:50 – 14:15 *Welcome*
Ram Manikkalingam, Director, Dialogue Advisory Group
- Keynote address: Ireland and the UN Security Council – Advancing peace and justice*
Simon Coveney T.D., Minister for Foreign Affairs & Minister for Defence, Ireland
- 14:15 – 15:15 *Q&A with the International Criminal Court Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda*
Fatou Bensouda, Prosecutor, International Criminal Court
Moderator: Christian Wenaweser, Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations
- 15:15 – 15:30 Break
- 15:30 – 16:30 *Sudan*
Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland
Suliman Baldo, Senior Policy Advisor, The Sentry
Moderator: Fleur Ravensbergen, Deputy Director, Dialogue Advisory Group
- 16:30 – 16:45 Performance by ASIM GORASHI, Sudanese Sufi and folk musician
- 16:45 – 17:45 *Parallel Break-out Panels*
- Mozambique*
Carlos Dias, Executive Director, Cabo Delgado Local Economic Development Agency (ADEL-CD)
Omar Saranga, National Director for Defence Policy, Ministry of National Defence of Mozambique
Moderator: Hermenegildo Mulhovo, Executive Director, Institute for Multiparty Democracy
- Myanmar*
Zin Mar Aung, Acting Foreign Minister, Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)
Sai Sam Kham, Civil Society Representative
Moderator: Emma Leslie, Executive Director, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
1st comment: Agnès Callamard, Secretary General, Amnesty International
- 17:45 – 18:00 Break
- 18:00 – 18:45 *Netflix's The Serpent: A Serial Killer, Diplomacy, and Gender*
Angela Kane, Former UN Under-Secretary-General & Vice President, International Institute for Peace;
Chairperson of DAG's Board of Directors
Moderator: Leoni Cuclenaere, Former Ambassador of the Netherlands and Member of DAG's
Board of Directors

Amsterdam Dialogue 2021

Agenda

17 & 18 MAY 2021

ONLINE EDITION

TUESDAY, 18 MAY 2021

- 12:45 Log in available
- 12:50 – 13:00 *Welcome*
- Keynote address: Human rights advocacy in the pandemic*
Kenneth Roth, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch
- 13:00 – 13:45 *Leadership in peace, justice and human rights:*
Q&A with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet
Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations
Moderator: Ram Manikkalingam, Director, Dialogue Advisory Group
- 13:45 – 14:00 Break
- 14:00 – 15:00 *Iraq*
Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)
Fuad Hussein, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Iraq
Moderator: Joost Hiltermann, Program Director, Middle East and North Africa, International Crisis Group
- 15:00 – 15:15 Performance by MONA MAGDI, Sudanese singer
- 15:15 – 16:15 *Parallel Break-out Panels*
- Venezuela: A conversation with government negotiator Héctor Rodríguez, Governor of Miranda*
Héctor Rodríguez Castro, Governor of Miranda State, Venezuela
Moderator: Juan Garrigues, Deputy Director, Dialogue Advisory Group
- Yemen*
Bilqis Al-Lahabi, Researcher and Yemeni Civil Rights Leader
Maged Al-Madhaji, Executive Director & Co-Founder of the Sana'a Centre for Strategic Studies
Moderator: Vlad Corbu, Chief Programme Manager, Dialogue Advisory Group
- 16:15 – 16:30 Break
- 16:30 – 17:30 *Afghanistan*
Abdul Matin Bek, Member Of The Peace Negotiation Team Of The Islamic Republic Of Afghanistan
Moderator: Ashley Jackson, Co-director, Centre for the Study of Armed Groups at Overseas Development Institute
1st comment: Sergio Jaramillo, Senior Advisor, European Institute of Peace
- 17:30 – 17:45 Performance by KEVIN ZHU (Violin) with ROHAN DE SILVA (Piano)
- 17:45 – 18:45 *The Horn of Africa*
Jeffrey Feltman, U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa
Tsedale Lemma, Founder and Chief Editor, Addis Standard
Moderator: Comfort Ero, Interim Vice President & Program Director Africa, International Crisis Group
1st comment: Sonja Hyland, Political Director at Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland

Q&A WITH ICC PROSECUTOR FATOU BENSOU DA

Panellist:

- Fatou Bensouda, *Prosecutor, International Criminal Court*

Moderator:

- Christian Wenaweser, *Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations*

As in previous years, the Amsterdam Dialogue 2021 saw Fatou Bensouda, Prosecutor of the ICC, in a Q&A session moderated by Christian Wenaweser, Liechtenstein's Permanent Representative to the UN. As the Prosecutor entered the final weeks in office of her nine-year tenure, participants took the opportunity to reflect on the challenges and achievements of the Court, as well as avenues for advancing global justice and accountability in the years to come.

Despite Prosecutor Bensouda taking office at a time heralded as a new era for international accountability, participants enumerated the range of obstacles – both institutional and political – which have undermined the Court's ability to discharge the mandate set out in the 1998 Rome Statute. As a judicial institution unattached to an executive or legislature, the ICC is dependent on support from signatories of the Rome Statute. For that reason, participants emphasised that state parties should uphold the institution's independence, defend the Court from politically motivated attacks, and refrain from obstructing Court proceedings. Past attempts to impede the Court's workings have included sanctions brought against individual members of the Office of the Prosecutor, and long-standing

resistance to the Court's operations in certain parts of the globe. A perception among some leaders that the ICC has been disproportionately concerned with crimes committed on the African continent, for instance, has generated substantial push-back to the Court's work there.

Nonetheless, participants also recognised the headway made by the Court in the face of these challenges. In Colombia, the ICC was identified as having been instrumental in advancing the cause of justice during the country's ongoing peace process. By supporting the formation of a special court, the ICC has helped create a climate in which the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has acknowledged responsibility for historical kidnapping cases and a number of army officers have also been indicted for extra-judicial killings. A range of voices agreed that the nature of engagement in Colombia provides a model for how the ICC can promote justice and contribute to more sustainable peace deals elsewhere. The Court's relationship with many African states has also improved in recent years. While the African Union once entertained passing a resolution to block cooperation with the ICC across the entire continent, recent collaboration with member states has resulted in several important



Christian Wenaweser

successes, such as the extradition of Sudanese militia commander, Ali Kushayb, to The Hague.

Turning towards the future, participants stressed that while the ICC will inevitably continue to face contexts in which engagement is politically fraught, international justice should not be sacrificed for short term political expediency. On that basis, participants reaffirmed the need for the Court to stand firm against political pressures and build the kind of institutional credibility which will ensure greater international support. Equally, at a time in which new questions of justice and accountability are emerging in conflicts from Ethiopia to Myanmar and the Middle East, participants emphasised the need for greater dialogue between international actors pursuing peace and those seeking justice. As Prosecutor Bensouda hands over her mandate to Prosecutor-elect Karim Khan, she was praised for the skill and integrity with which she has conducted herself during her time in office.



Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda

SUDAN

Panellists:

- Pekka Haavisto, *Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland*
- Suliman Baldo, *Senior Policy Advisor, The Sentry*

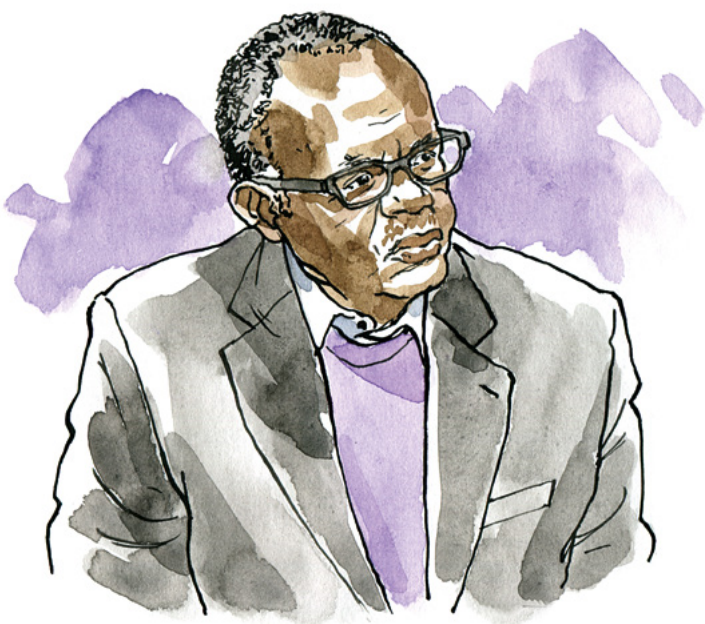
Moderator:

- Fleur Ravensbergen, *Deputy Director, Dialogue Advisory Group*

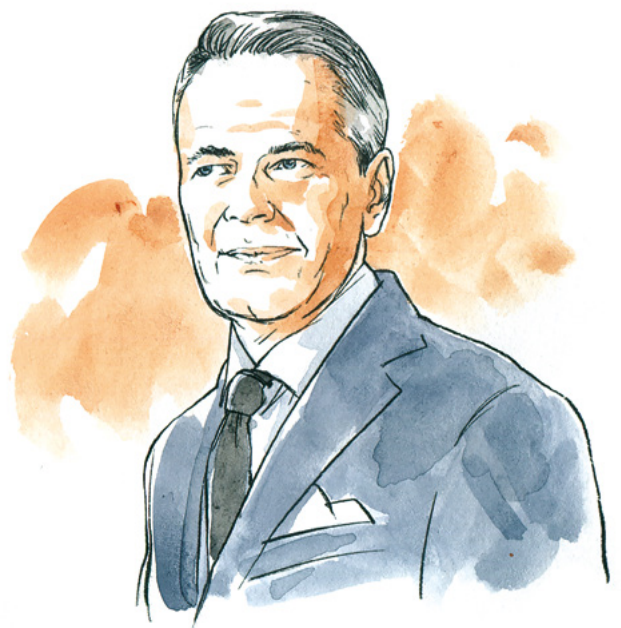
Two years after the ouster of former president Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's political transition remains fragile. While the transitional authorities have taken some significant steps towards achieving the goals of the revolution that led to al-Bashir's deposition, including signing the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) in October 2020, considerable challenges remain to avoiding new cycles of violence. Participants examined these challenges in detail, notably the strained relations between the civilian and military components of the transitional Sovereignty Council, ongoing division among political parties in government, and the need to incorporate non-signatory rebel groups

into the JPA. Likewise, participants noted that, along with formally implementing provisions in the JPA, there are also outstanding questions over the legitimacy of rebel leaders fighting for causes which are not connected to the interests of local populations.

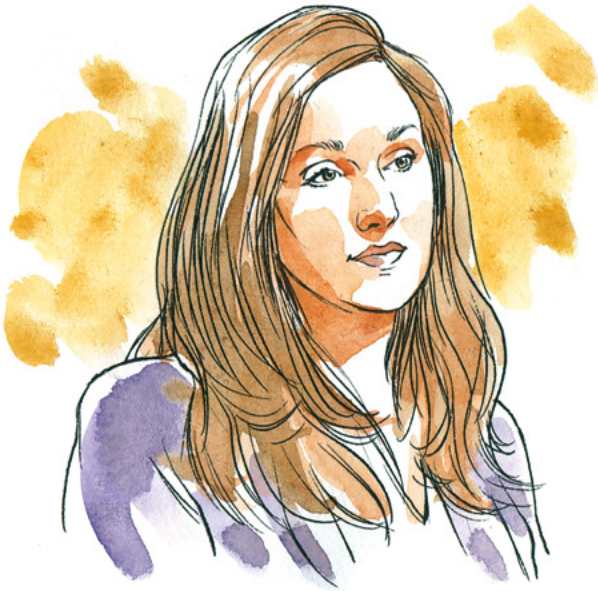
Despite these challenges, participants remained optimistic about the potential for a successful transition. The inclusion of former armed movements in government and state institutions stands to ensure much greater representation in the political process. Meanwhile, the grassroots movement that was key to the revolution remains a force in its own



Suliman Baldo



Pekka Haavisto



Fleur Ravensbergen

right, capable of driving forward a democratic transition. According to participants, the corrupt practices designed to enrich ruling elites during al-Bashir's 30-year rule have persisted and require a serious response by the government. Most notably, by bringing assets currently managed by companies owned by members of the security services under the control of the Ministry of Finance.

Discussing regional and international dynamics, participants stressed that the current tensions between Sudan and its neighbours will also be a determining factor in the success of the transition. The civilian component

of government has displayed no appetite for entering the conflict in Ethiopia's Tigray region, thereby preventing an escalation on the border between the two countries. In fact, several Sudanese actors have signalled a willingness to engage positively with their eastern neighbours on the issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), feared by many to be a potential trigger for regional instability. Prime Minister Hamdok stressed that an agreement is expected to benefit Sudan, including by generating a more reliable electricity supply.

Finally, participants encouraged further international support for efforts aimed at ending impunity for crimes committed in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains and elsewhere. The landmark visit of the ICC Prosecutor to Khartoum in October 2020 – the first of an ICC prosecutor in the last 30 years – was heralded as a particularly significant development. Participants acknowledged the positive momentum generated by the cooperation between the ICC and the Sudanese government. Progress on the handover of high-level indictees to the ICC, including al-Bashir, would considerably advance the implementation of JPA provisions on justice and accountability, and could pave the way for the incorporation of other armed groups into the peace agreement.



MOZAMBIQUE



Panellists:

- Carlos Dias, *Executive Director, Cabo Delgado Local Economic Development Agency (ADEL-CD)*
- Omar Saranga, *National Director for Defence Policy, Ministry of National Defence of Mozambique*

Moderator:

- Hermenegildo Mulhovo, *Executive Director, Institute for Multiparty Democracy*

Since 2017, Mozambique has faced an increasingly violent insurgency in its northern province of Cabo Delgado. Spearheaded by the Islamist militant group Ahlu Sunna wa Jama (ASWJ), the insurgency has expanded in the past year, targeting key towns in the province and displacing thousands. With ASWJ claiming affiliation with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the insurgency risks spiralling from a local problem into a wider conflict affecting neighbouring states.

Assessing the key dynamics at play in Cabo Delgado, participants highlighted the importance of cultivating dialogue with local communities as part of a comprehensive approach to peace and security in the region. Engaging local communities is necessary to understand the grievances that fuel the insurgency and develop realistic solutions. Despite being home to large

reserves of natural gas and other natural resources, Cabo Delgado is one of the most underdeveloped regions in the country. Local communities, particularly youth, have few job prospects and opportunities for growth, making Cabo Delgado a fertile ground for ASWJ recruitment. In this respect, participants commended the government's efforts to establish the Northern Integrated Development Agency (ADIN) to help create jobs and development in Cabo Delgado. However, they also encouraged the government to identify local partners in the province, including local and religious leaders, to help assess priorities and mobilise local capacity. Doing so could ensure increased local buy-in and better information for future government initiatives.

Given the complexities of the situation in Cabo Delgado, participants emphasised the need for multifaceted,

complementary solutions that address the different dynamics fuelling the insurgency. Economic initiatives and local dialogue should work in tandem with anti-radicalisation strategies and a military approach to rolling back the insurgency. Participants also noted President Nyusi's statements in favour of dialogue, but cautioned that direct engagement with the insurgents would require greater clarity on the leadership and aims of ASWJ. Increased consultations with local actors, particularly religious leaders, may also help shed light on the insurgency's internal dynamics. For their part, the Mozambican authorities have welcomed international assistance in support of local solutions but, given the rapid growth of the insurgency and its affiliation with ISIS, increased international support may be needed to help prevent greater instability in Mozambique and the wider region.



MYANMAR

Panellists:

- Zin Mar Aung, *Acting Foreign Minister, Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH)*
- Sai Sam Kham, *Civil Society Representative*

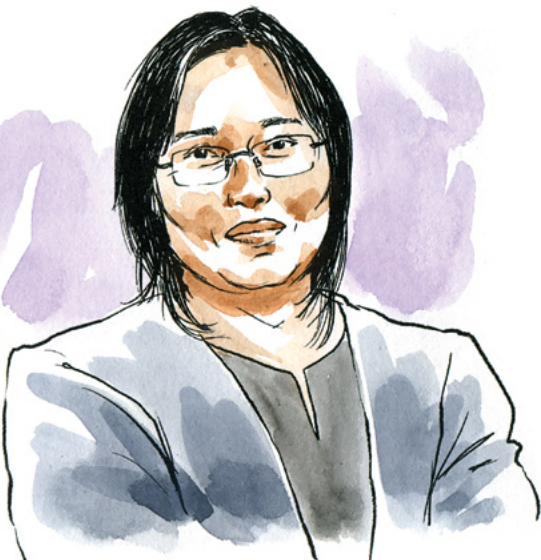
Moderator:

- Emma Leslie, *Executive Director, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies*

Myanmar's February 2021 coup d'état brought a halt to the country's tentative steps towards democratic liberalisation and precipitated an unprecedented popular resistance movement with youth at its forefront. The security forces' unwillingness to hand back power since then has been accompanied by a crackdown on the opposition and a flare-up of ethnic armed conflict in different parts of the country. The widespread civil disobedience campaign is making the country ungovernable for the military junta and, with the country's economy at a standstill, the UN has warned of looming food insecurity. With little over a hundred days since the military's takeover, panellists reflected on ways the people of Myanmar are trying to overcome military

control and chart a path towards a more peaceful and democratic future.

Despite the complexity of the situation in Myanmar, participants also shared cause for optimism. They noted that the country is experiencing new levels of unity across religious and ethnic dividing lines in defiance of military rule. Civil society leaders and politicians, including ministers from the exiled National Unity Government (NUG), have publicly apologised for having failed to speak out against the expulsion and treatment of the Rohingya ethnic minority. Yet despite some promising proposals to overturn restrictions on Rohingya citizenship, participants



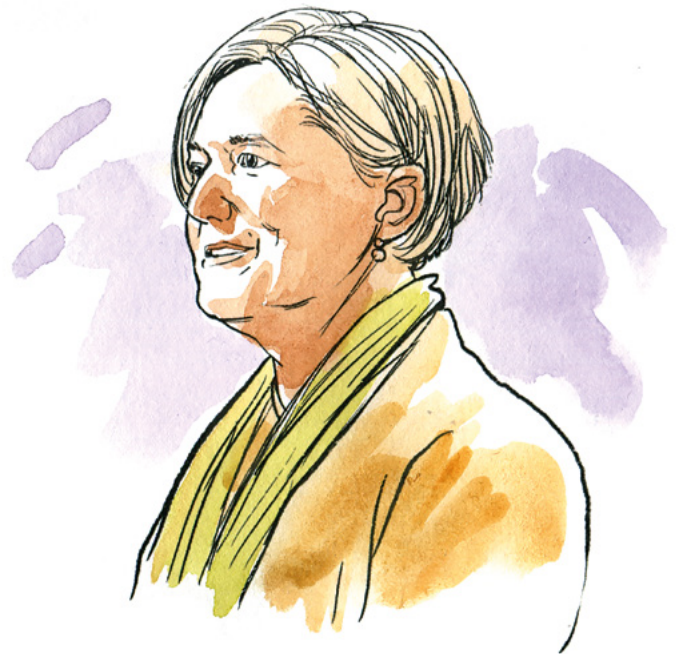
Zin Mar Aung



Sai Sam Kham

believed that a radical change in social attitudes is required to overcome years of inflammatory propaganda targeting the ethnic group. Participants also highlighted domestic actors' ongoing efforts to advance a dual-roadmap for peace and state-building. Myanmar's legislature in exile, the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, as well as the Ethnic Armed Organisations, political parties, popular resistance movement and civil society leaders are engaged in an unconventional dialogue on Myanmar's future governance. Through the promulgation of a Federal Democracy charter, the NUG has proposed to lay the foundations of a federal union to address grievances and guarantee the rights of Myanmar's ethnic groups.

Participants cautioned, however, that this vision will remain unattainable so long as the military retains control of the country. The brutality of the security forces against civilians and opponents continues unabated and increases the risk of a fully-fledged conflict with far-reaching humanitarian consequences. Participants ended by calling for greater involvement of the international community, notably China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in finding a solution to the crisis.



Emma Leslie



NETFLIX'S *THE SERPENT*: A SERIAL KILLER, DIPLOMACY, AND GENDER

Panellist:

- Angela Kane, *Former UN Under-Secretary-General & Vice President, International Institute for Peace; Chairperson of DAG's Board of Directors*

Moderator:

- Leoni Cuelenaere, *Former Ambassador of the Netherlands and Member of DAG's Board of Directors*

In a lively discussion, Chairperson of DAG's Board and former UN Under-Secretary General, Angela Kane, spoke to former Dutch Ambassador Leoni Cuelenaere, about her portrayal in the BBC-Netflix thriller series *The Serpent*, as well as the broader theme of gender and diplomacy. Set in the 1970s at a time when Kane was posted in Bangkok with her then-spouse Herman Knippenberg, the series depicts the young couple's investigation into the murder of two Dutch backpackers killed by infamous serial killer Charles Sobhraj. In a wide-ranging exchange, Kane offered a first-hand account of the extraordinary true story behind the investigation, as well as the gendered representation of her character in the television drama. Both guests also shared insights into the barriers facing women entering the world of diplomacy.

Based in Thailand in the mid-1970s, Kane described how the disappearance of a young Dutch couple – who were of a similar age to themselves at the time – had a profound impact on her and her husband. With neither the authorities nor the international community pressing to investigate the disappearance, the couple decided to pursue the case themselves. However, despite playing

a decisive role in the investigation, Kane's contribution was significantly underplayed in the series. Indeed, her portrayal as a meek “diplomat's wife” conspicuously belies her assertive character, distinguished diplomatic career, and even her physical appearance.



Spurred on by these revelations, Kane and Cuelenaere reflected on the range of obstacles facing women in the diplomatic world, many of which became overtly apparent over the course of their careers. During her service at the Dutch Foreign Office, for instance, Cuelenaere foreign counterparts would almost invariably assume her to be an ambassador's wife, rather than an ambassador herself. Likewise, Kane was once turned down from a position lest she might take a job from a man that would provide for his family. In this light, both acknowledged quotas as valuable tools for supporting women's active political participation while they also urged young female diplomats to be assertive and speak up for themselves, emphasising that women's voices continue to be silenced in a range of contexts - from peace processes to television series. In Kane's words: if women don't write history, it inevitably gets distorted.



The Amsterdam Dialogue @AmsDialogue · May 17

If women don't write history, it inevitably gets distorted.

@LeoniCuelenaere spoke to @kaneview about her recent depiction in the BBC-Netflix series *The Serpent*, discrimination in diplomacy, and advice for young women making their way in conflict mediation.



Q&A WITH UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS MICHELLE BACHELET

Panellist:

- Michelle Bachelet, *High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations*

Moderator:

- Ram Manikkalingam, *Director, Dialogue Advisory Group*

The eleventh edition of the Amsterdam Dialogue featured a Q&A session with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, moderated by DAG's Director, Ram Manikkalingam. The High Commissioner, who became Chile's first female head of state when she served as President for two terms, had also been Health Minister and

Defence Minister of Chile before moving to the UN. There, she has headed UN Women before becoming human rights chief. Discussion focussed on the different challenges of advancing peace, justice and human rights in positions of national and international leadership.



High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet



Ram Manikkalingam

The session opened by noting the importance of approaching peace, justice and human rights as interconnected concepts. Political will is a pre-requisite for reconciling peace and justice, as is the need to address social injustices and exclusion, as well as to cultivate social dialogue to advance reconciliation. Participants noted how accountability and transparency in public institutions, as well as the protection of human rights make for more sustainable, peaceful and cohesive societies. Participants also underlined the importance of dealing with past injustice. Transitional justice mechanisms, truth-finding and giving voice to victims have proven to be instrumental as a first step towards reconciliation, and the kind of institutional reform needed to avoid repeating past wrongs. Reflecting on the Chilean context, the relevance of dialogue and trying to understand the others' experiences

through civic friendship was identified as an effective way to address the root causes of the conflict.

Exchanging personal experiences, participants noted how leadership at all levels requires active listening. As a national leader with a high degree of executive power, ethical choices need to be taken with constituents' needs in mind. This understanding nourishes the work of advancing human rights on a global scale as High Commissioner. There, the focus lies on convincing leaders that the right thing is also the smart thing to do, despite existing political, social and economic sensitivities. This attitude also underpins the OHCHR's approach to individual cases of violent conflict, where a mix of public messaging and quiet diplomacy aims to protect human rights.

IRAQ

Panellists:

- Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, *UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)*
- Fuad Hussein, *Minister of Foreign Affairs, Iraq*

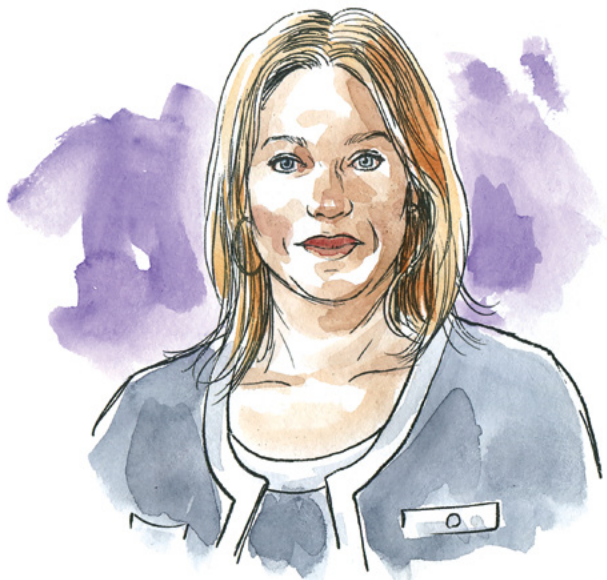
Moderator:

- Joost Hiltermann, *Program Director, Middle East and North Africa, International Crisis Group*

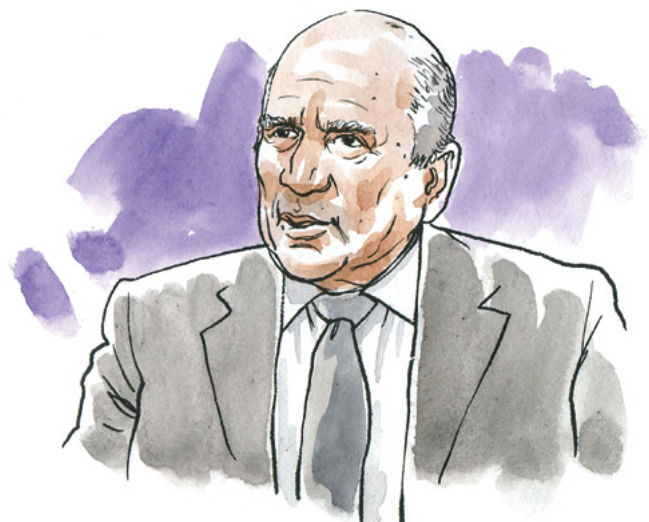
Security threats posed by non-state armed actors, economic hardship, widespread popular discontent and the fallout of US-Iran tensions are just a few of the major challenges facing Iraq. In this context, parliamentary elections due to take place in October 2021 have the potential to either lay the groundwork for a more sustainable and peaceful future in Iraq, or to aggravate the array of existing problems and obstacles to democratic governance which the country already faces.

Participants acknowledged the October polls are unlikely to lead to the emergence of a new political order but recognised their potential to restore some trust in the democratic

process. Avoiding the same mistakes made during the 2018 parliamentary elections, which included a failure to introduce effective mechanisms for preventing electoral fraud, was described as vital to averting greater tensions on the streets. However, outraged by the wholesale lack of accountability for the killing of hundreds of protestors in recent months, some influential voices in Iraq have called for the boycott of the election. While recognising the urgency of bringing justice to victims, participants voiced concerns that a boycott could inadvertently serve the goals of self-interested actors -including political parties and militias- and advocated for measures to support youth turnout. Participants were hopeful that the UN Security Council



Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert

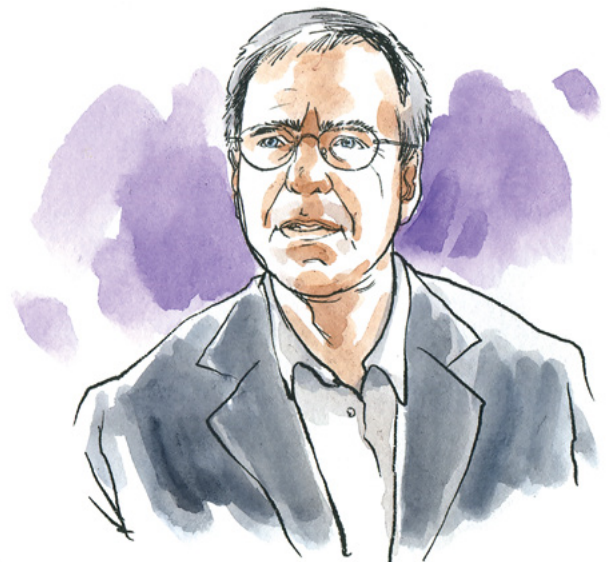


Fuad Hussein

(UNSC) would approve the deployment of an observation team to assist preparations for the elections. Such a mission was later established by the UNSC on 27 May 2021.

Ongoing security concerns are another factor that could undermine prospects of a democratic electoral process. Participants indicated that there are forces at play that wish to sabotage the election, foster social unrest and discourage voters from going to the polls. More broadly, the recent increase in ISIS activity, coupled with instability in neighbouring Syria along the porous border with Iraq, were identified as a major source of concern. Moreover, participants identified the lack of efficient coordination between the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government as a primary cause of the security gaps being exploited by ISIS, particularly in the Iraqi Disputed Territories (IDT). However, the Erbil-Baghdad security talks that resulted in the establishment of Joint Coordination Centres in the IDT were welcomed as an important step towards addressing these gaps. Other key measures to counteract ISIS would include improving the condition of millions of internally displaced people, and reducing the capacity of violent extremist groups to exploit their vulnerability to recruitment.

The presence of armed groups that operate outside the control of the Iraqi state was identified both as a security challenge and as a threat to the sovereignty of the country. Participants also stressed that some states are continuing to take advantage of weak national institutions to meddle in Baghdad's internal affairs. Concrete actions to bring those armed actors under state control would render Iraq less vulnerable to external interference. Finally, participants alluded to the current thawing between Iran and Saudi Arabia, in which the Iraqi government is acting as a mediator, to highlight the potential for Baghdad to support more constructive engagement between regional actors.



Joost Hiltermann



YEMEN

Panellists:

- Bilqis Al-Lahabi, *Researcher and Yemeni Civil Rights Leader*
- Maged Al-Madhaji, *Executive Director & Co-Founder, Sana'a Centre for Strategic Studies*

Moderator:

- Vlad Corbu, *Chief Programme Manager, Dialogue Advisory Group*

Despite a Saudi ceasefire proposal and a new US administration prompting cause for cautious optimism in Yemen in early 2021, progress towards a peace deal or alleviating the country's humanitarian plight has been distinctly limited. Participants shed light on the local and international dynamics driving the conflict, as well as offering a frank appraisal of prospects for any future peace deal.

Often represented as a proxy conflict directed by foreign powers, the war in Yemen has been driven by domestic factors fuelled – but not initiated – by external parties. Seven years after the Houthi movement seized the capital Sana'a, the collection of domestic forces fighting against the

Houthi movement has grown ever more disparate. In turn, the government of Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi has weakened with former allies growing more independent and new armed actors entering the fray. Scarce few Yemenis now feel represented by a government based out of the Saudi capital and, in this context, the Houthis have consolidated their position as the country's dominant armed party, seizing the opportunity to lead a renewed offensive on Marib.

At the international level, a dramatic shift in US policy towards ending the conflict has so far yielded scarce reward. Meanwhile, with Riyadh increasingly desperate to extricate itself from the conflict, the Houthis have rapidly become



Bilqis Al-Lahabi



Maged Al-Madhaji

one of Iran's most valuable regional allies which, in coming months, may be mobilised as a makeweight in any eventual nuclear deal with the US. Beyond the Riyadh-Tehran rivalry, the conflict in Yemen will also have significant ramifications elsewhere in the Gulf and the Horn of Africa. With weapons and mercenaries flooding into the country from across its borders, any eventual settlement to the conflict is likely to resonate much further afield.

In a candid assessment of prospects for peace, participants explored options for how the new UN Special Representative might approach the conflict, whether parties to the conflict consider there to be more to gain on the battlefield than at the negotiating table, and whether the international community should adapt its approach to conflict management rather than pushing for a comprehensive ceasefire. In particular, UNSCR 2216, which has provided the international framework for resolving the Yemen conflict in the past six years, appears increasingly in need of review in a context which has evolved dramatically since 2015. With a range of voices present, guests offered a variety of recommendations for advancing the international peace process. Some participants insisted

whilst simultaneously building greater pressure on the Houthis and restructuring the national government. Others indicated that focus on drying up the war economy and challenging the aggravating role played by a number of Gulf Arab states in the conflict may be a more fruitful path forward. Whatever direction peace efforts take, however, the Yemen War shows little sign of abating.



Vlad Corbu



VENEZUELA

Panellist:

- Héctor Rodríguez Castro, *Governor of Miranda State, Venezuela*

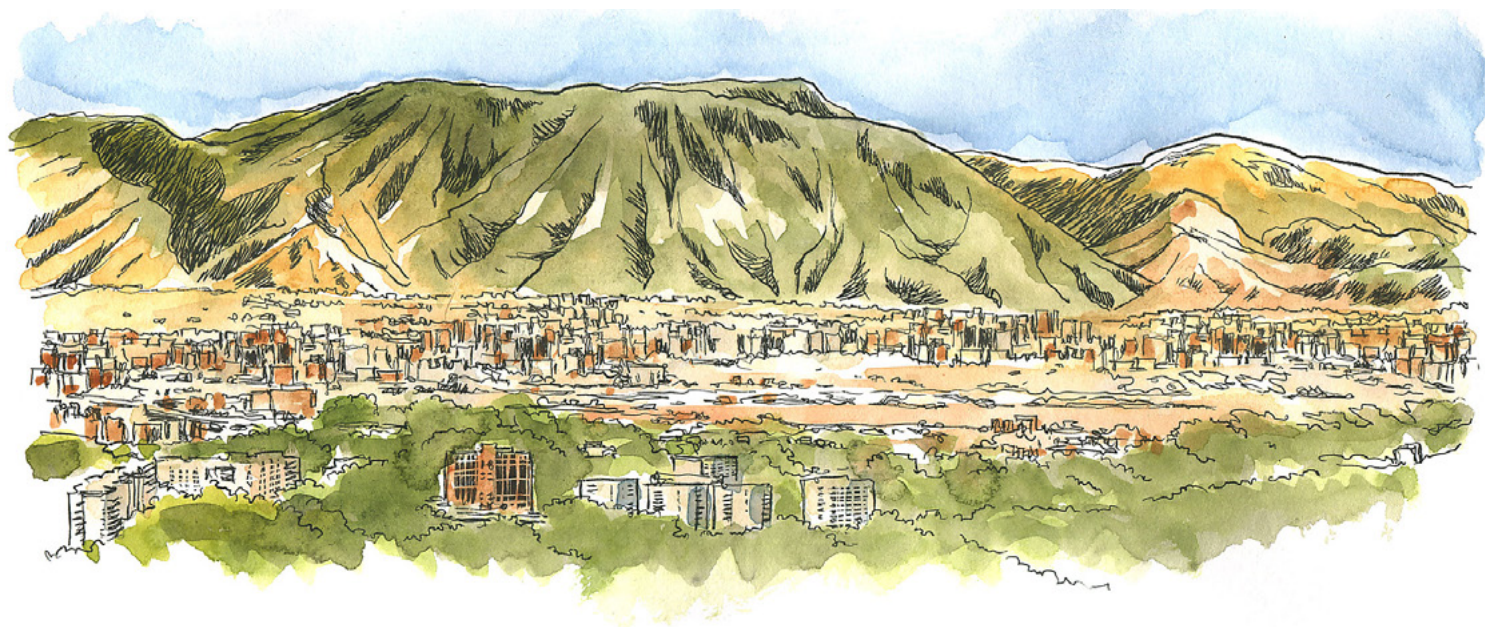
Moderator:

- Juan Garrigues, *Deputy Director, Dialogue Advisory Group*

Venezuela's spiralling political, economic and humanitarian crisis continues to have an immense effect on domestic and regional stability. President Nicolás Maduro has managed to remain in power despite international sanctions and the recognition of the opposition's interim government under Juan Guaidó by over sixty countries. Chavismo has reclaimed a majority in parliament as a result of the December 2020 elections which were boycotted by most of the opposition. With local and regional elections due in November 2021, calls for negotiations between the government and different parts of the opposition have grown louder. Despite high political polarisation, most Venezuelans and internationals

agree that the country's political crisis can only be resolved through negotiation.

In a conversation with Venezuelan governor and government negotiator Héctor Rodríguez, participants discussed the different challenges and opportunities for a negotiated solution to the political crisis. They analysed the latest developments, including the establishment of a new, more balanced national electoral council, which might lead to broader opposition participation in the 2021 local elections. They also discussed the role of international actors in supporting a peaceful resolution to the country's



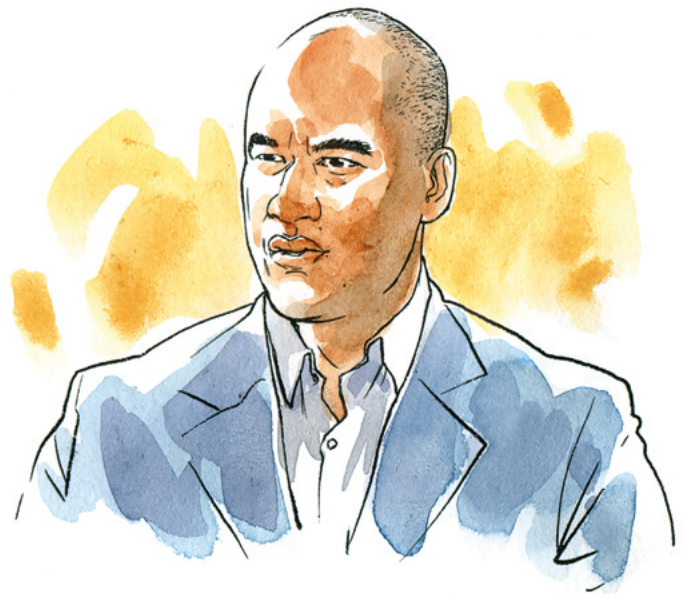
interconnected crises and the impact of two preliminary investigations opened by the ICC into alleged crimes committed by security forces during public demonstrations, as well as alleged crimes committed by the US through unilateral sanctions. Participants maintained that US influence in Venezuela's political crisis continues to be immense. And that the effects of the US maximum pressure policy under Trump can still be clearly felt. Despite positive signals by the new Biden administration, concrete actions to ease the policy are still pending. It was suggested that for a sustainable resolution of the crisis to be reached, international actors must play a more active role in mediation efforts.

It was stressed that only the most extreme forces believed in a clear victory over the other side, and that most actors in

the country are in favour of seeking political compromise. Both Chavismo and the opposition are components of Venezuela's new political and social realities which will continue to enjoy popular support. Talks with actors from all sides of the political spectrum are therefore necessary, despite the internal tensions that these can produce within their respective constituencies. Finally, participants noted that the ICC investigations must not be used as an instrument of political pressure. Participants stressed that the government should collaborate with the ICC and share information on domestic investigations into abuses of power while the ICC should play a supporting role in government-led investigations and reforms. For the first time, the ICC is also investigating whether international sanctions can amount to crimes under the jurisdiction of the Court.



Juan Garrigues



Héctor Rodríguez Castro

AFGHANISTAN



Panellist:

- Abdul Matin Bek, *Member of the Peace Negotiation Team of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*

Moderator:

- Ashley Jackson, *Co-director, Centre for the Study of Armed Groups at Overseas Development Institute*

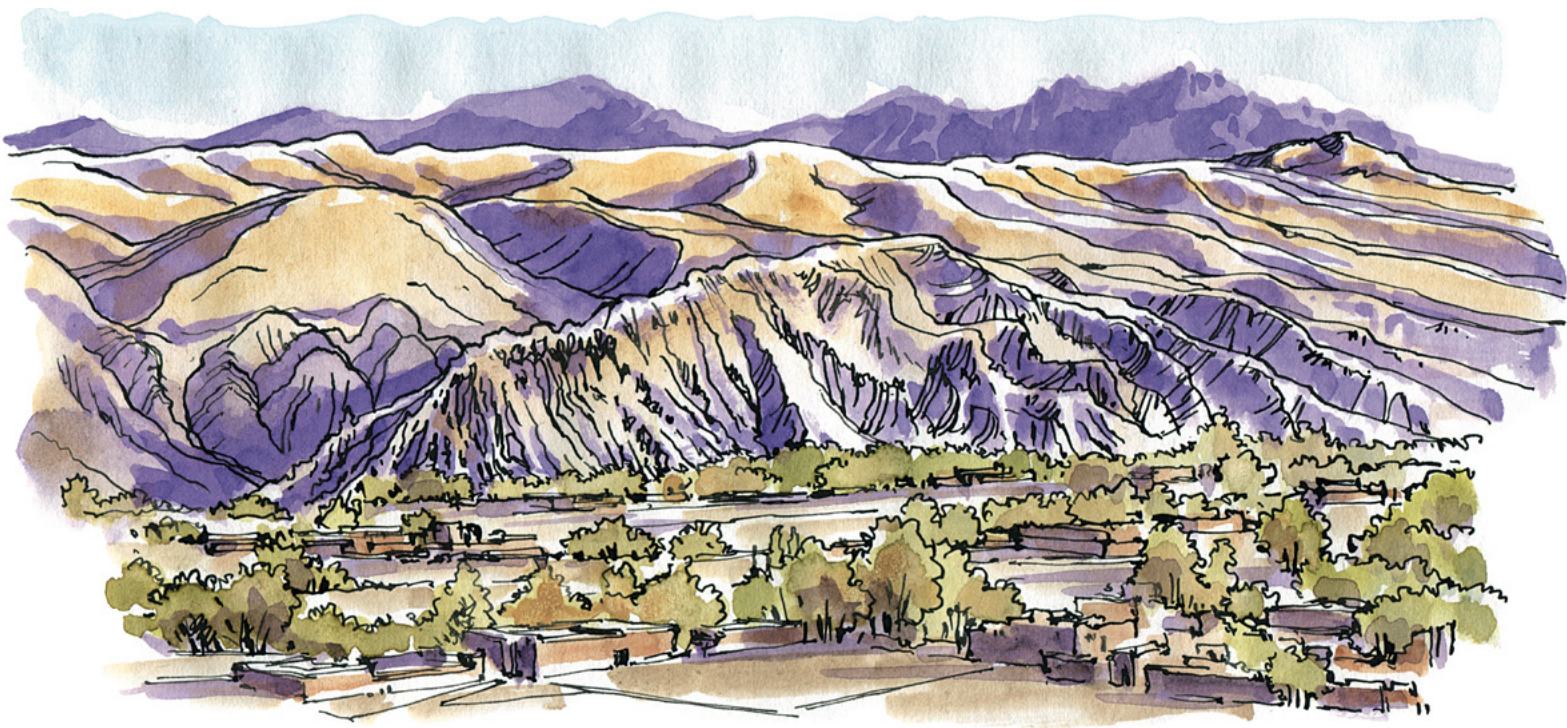
On 14 April 2021, President Biden announced that all US troops would withdraw from Afghanistan by 11 September 2021, exactly two decades after the al-Qaeda attacks which prompted the US intervention. This decision ensured the US would miss the 1 May 2021 deadline for troop withdrawal which had been reached as part of the February 2020 deal which saw the Taliban agree to participate in intra-Afghan peace negotiations in exchange. Since then, the Taliban have increased their attacks and progress in the intra-Afghan peace talks - which include the Taliban, the Afghan government and civil society leaders - has been limited. To invigorate the process, the Biden administration proposed a draft peace agreement to the Afghan Government and the Taliban.

From the outset, the peace process has been marred by a series of setbacks, ranging from the parties' starkly divergent negotiating positions to the weakened position in which the Afghan government's peace

negotiation team now finds itself. The Taliban continue to view the process as an opportunity to facilitate their return to the political stage, using the process to gain legitimacy as a state-like entity. Despite the weaknesses inherent to the process, participants stressed that none of the parties, including the Taliban, wanted to see a collapse of the talks. Discussions had led to some positive outcomes: by remaining engaged in the discussions, the Taliban has implicitly recognised the Afghan government as a legitimate interlocutor, and vice-versa. The process has also forced the Taliban to adjust their position, exposing some of their own limitations and disconnect from Afghan society.

Participants acknowledged the intra-Afghan negotiations show little sign of making progress in the short-term. In that light, military escalation was anticipated to follow the full US withdrawal, with the possible take-over of key strategic cities, such as Kandahar, Kunduz and Faryab by

the Taliban. To prevent further chaos, participants stressed the importance of protecting the negotiation process until such a time as the Taliban recognise the impossibility of a military solution. Participants suggested using concerns about the possible collapse of Afghanistan in the case of a full take-over by the Taliban to generate a coordinated international response and continued political and financial support. Recommendations included joint international efforts to push the Taliban to commit to women's and human rights, including through proactive UN engagement and pressure on regional stakeholders. Noting the strength of Afghan youth, media and women's groups, participants called for stronger support to domestic civil society organisations. Remarking on how victim-centered justice has taken a backseat in recent years, participants also urged the Afghan government to engage with the ICC.



THE HORN OF AFRICA

Panellists:

- Jeffrey Feltman, *U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa*
- Tsedale Lemma, *Founder and Chief Editor, Addis Standard*

Moderator:

- Comfort Ero, *Interim Vice President & Africa Program Director, International Crisis Group*

The Horn of Africa is facing a myriad of interlinked political, security and humanitarian challenges. The protracted political tension in Ethiopia's Tigray region that descended into war in 2020 is having devastating humanitarian consequences, and Ethiopia's upcoming elections are only likely to increase division. Tensions between Sudan and Ethiopia over the Al-Fashqa border area, Ethiopia's unilateral decision to begin filling the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and Eritrea's embroilment in Tigray have further complicated regional dynamics. Likewise, an emerging alliance between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia risks upending the region's basic security

architecture. Increased strategic interest in the region from an array of international actors stands to further jeopardise regional stability.

Throughout the discussion, the crisis in Tigray took centre stage. In addition to the human costs of the war, the crisis also represents a threat to the integrity of the Ethiopian state, the collapse of which could have destabilising effects throughout the entire Horn. Participants highlighted that the crisis is inherently of a political nature, and that the conflict in Tigray is symptomatic of opposing domestic views regarding the country's future. Prime Minister Abiy





Comfort Ero

Ahmed's centralisation policies were seen to be at odds with Ethiopia's ethnic federalism which, while imperfect, has been credited with preserving the integrity of the state for almost three decades. The Tigray region's political and military strength in comparison with other regions in the country has prevented Abiy from swiftly ousting the region's government. Meanwhile, Eritrea's military involvement and

Abiy's refusal to engage in political talks were identified as key challenges to resolving the crisis.

Reflecting on possible ways forward, participants noted that Ethiopians themselves should work to resolve the political crisis through a national dialogue on the future of Ethiopian federalism and the nature of the country's social contract. Increased pressure on Addis Ababa from the international community - which has been slow to recognise that Ethiopia has ceased to be a source of stability in the region - will be needed to initiate such dialogue. Finally, participants proposed exploring channels of communication to push Eritrea to withdraw troops from Tigray. While there was broad consensus on the significant role Eritrea is playing, participants recognised that the international community lacked tools for engagement. The UN and Arab Gulf states, in particular, were identified as having the opportunity to play a more constructive role in bringing about Eritrea's disengagement.



Jeffrey Feltman



Tsedale Lemma

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Bachelet	Michelle	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	High Commissioner for Human Rights
Baldo	Suliman	The Sentry	Senior Policy Advisor
Bek	Abdul Matin	Peace Negotiation Team Of The Islamic Republic Of Afghanistan	Member & Senior Political Advisor to the President of Afghanistan
Bensouda	Fatou	Office of the Prosecutor, International Criminal Court	Prosecutor
Corbu	Vlad	Dialogue Advisory Group	Chief Programme Manager
Coveney	Simon	Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland	Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence
Cuelenaere	Leoni	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands; Dialogue Advisory Group	Former Ambassador; Member of the Board of Directors
Dias	Carlos	Cabo Delgado Local Economic Development Agency (ADEL-CD)	Executive Director
Ero	Comfort	International Crisis Group	Interim Vice-President & Africa Program Director
Feltman	Jeffrey	U.S. Department of States	U.S. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa
Garrigues	Juan	Dialogue Advisory Group	Deputy Director
Haavisto	Pekka	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland	Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hennis-Plasschaert	Jeanine	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq	Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI
Hiltermann	Joost	International Crisis Group	Programme Director, Middle East and North Africa
Hussein	Fuad	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq	Minister of Foreign Affairs
Jackson	Ashley	Overseas Development Institute	Co-director at the Centre for the Study of Armed Groups
Kane	Angela	International Institute for Peace; Dialogue Advisory Group	Vice President; Chairperson of the Board of Directors
Al-Lahabi	Bilqis	Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies	Yemeni Civil Rights Leader; Researcher
Lemma	Tsedale	Addis Standard	Founder & Chief Editor
Leslie	Emma	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies	Executive Director

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Al-Madhaji	Maged	Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies	Executive Director & Co-Founder
Manikkalingam	Ram	Dialogue Advisory Group	Director
Mulhovo	Hermenegildo	Institute for Multiparty Democracy	Executive Director
Ravensbergen	Fleur	Dialogue Advisory Group	Deputy Director
Rodríguez Castro	Héctor	Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	Governor of Miranda
Roth	Kenneth	Human Rights Watch	Executive Director
	Sai Sam Kham	Erasmus University Rotterdam	Myanmarese Civil Society Representative; PhD Candidate
Saranga	Omar	Ministry of National Defence of Mozambique	National Director for Defence Policy
Wenaweser	Christian	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein	Permanent Representative to the United Nations
	Zin Mar Aung	Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) of Myanmar	Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs

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Abbas	Reem	Andariya	Consultant & Freelance Journalist
Abdrakhmanov	Kairat	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan
Abedin	Hassan	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation	Advisor, Department of Communities and Minorities
Abrahams	Fred	Human Rights Watch	Associate Program Director
Afako	Barney	United Nations; Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisors	Member of the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan; Senior Mediation Advisor
Araoua	Abdelkader	African Union Commission	Coordinator for Silencing the Guns Unit
Bloch	Anne-Lise	University of Ottawa	Legal Researcher
Brickhill	Jeremy		Independent Consultant
Burgoon	Brian	University of Amsterdam	Professor in the Department of Politics
Byrne Nason	Geraldine	Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations	Permanent Representative
Coomaraswamy	Radhika	International Centre of Ethnic Studies	Chairperson
Callamard	Agnès	Amnesty International	Secretary General; Former UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions
Dicker	Richard	Human Rights Watch	Director, International Justice Program
Elizaguirre	Marlen	Basque Agency for Development and Cooperation	Cooperation Desk
Eskedal	Trine Jøranli	Norwegian Embassy in Colombo	Ambassador
Fakih	Lama	Human Rights Watch	Crisis and Conflict Director
Fernando	Anibal Manuel	Ministry of National Defence of Mozambique	National Director for Defence Intelligence
Gehrmann	Björn	German Federal Foreign Office	Team Lead Mediation & UN Peacebuilding, Stabilization Desk
Gilmour	Andrew	Berghof Foundation	Executive Director

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Golden	Lisa	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Director, Section for Peace and Reconciliation
Guillon	Raphaëlle	Dialogue Advisory Group	Special Advisor
Gulbrandsen	Anders	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway	Senior Advisor
Hayner	Priscilla	United Nations Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisors	Senior Mediation Advisor
Hearns	Aine	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland	Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit
Higel	Lahib	International Crisis Group	Senior Iraq Analyst
Hyland	Sonja	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland	Political Director
Jaramillo	Sergio	European Institute of Peace	Senior Advisor
Kakoma	Itonde	International Federation of the Red Cross	Permanent Representative for the IFRC to the African Union
Khan	Asif	United Nations	Chief of Mediation Support & Gender, Peace and Security
Lemma	Yodit	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue	Senior Programme Manager Horn of Africa
Mäenpää	Sirpa	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Centre for Peace Mediation	Ambassador for Mediation (Africa and the Middle East)
Mennen	Jip	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands	Policy Advisor Mediation
Muttettuwegama	Ramani	Tiruchelvam Associates	Managing Partner
Naraghi-Anderlini	Sanam	International Civil Society Action Network	Founder and CEO
Nardi	Claudio	Office for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein	Counsellor, Division for Economic Affairs and Development
Nouwen	Sarah	European University Institute	Professor of International Law
Nylander	Dag	Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution	Director
Ortega	Paul	Basque Agency for Development Cooperation	Director
Packer	John	University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law	Professor of International Conflict Resolution & Director of the Human Rights Research and Education Centre

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Papagianni	Katia	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue	Director for Mediation Support and Policy
Policzer	Pablo	University of Calgary	Associate Professor of Political Science
Preston McGhie	Meredith	Global Centre for Pluralism	Secretary General
Raghavan	Vikram	World Bank	Lead Counsel, Operations Policy
Reyes-Leguen	Gabriel	Toledo International Center for Peace	Director of Projects
Rishmawi	Mona	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	Chief of the Rule of Law, Equality and Non-Discrimination Branch
Salisbury	Peter	International Crisis Group	Senior Analyst for Yemen
Santana	Aracelly	United Nations	Former Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General
Schuurman	Marriet	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands	Director Stabilisation and Humanitarian Assistance
Shoamanesh	Sam	Office of the Prosecutor, International Criminal Court	Chef de Cabinet
Sorg	Sibylle	German Federal Foreign Office	Director General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation, Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Assistance
De Soto	Álvaro	Dialogue Advisory Group	Advisory Board Member
Sornarajah	Ahila	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office	Senior Lawyer
Stewart	Nick	Chambers of Nick Stewart QC	Barrister, Arbitrator and Mediator
Sumanthiran	Abraham	Sri Lankan Parliament	Lawyer and Member of Parliament
Taalas	Janne	CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation	CEO
Turunen	Teemu	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland	Director, Centre for Mediation
Tvedt	Idun	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway	Special Representative to the Philippines
Whitfield	Teresa	United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs	Director, Policy and Mediation Division

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Wierda	Marieke	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands	Rule of Law Advisor
Zerrougui	Leila	United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Former Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO

Please note that we had a small number of panel-only participants join for each panel.



Asif R. Khan آصف خان @AsifRKhanUN · May 17

Thanks @AmsDialogue for an interesting first day of conversations. None too easy but all worth untangling. #mediation



The Amsterdam Dialogue @AmsDialogue · May 17

International justice cannot be sacrificed at the altar of political expediency.

The Amsterdam Dialogue kicked off with Christian Wenaweser from @LiechtensteinUN in conversation with @IntlCrimCourt's Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda.



Sonja Hyland @HylandSonja · May 18

Great to speak today at @AmsDialogue on #Ethiopia and Ireland's work on the #UN Security Council on this issue. Honoured to share a panel with @TsedaleLemma @EroComfort & US Envoy Jeffrey Feldman.



Addis Standard and 6 others



Kevin Zhu @kevinzhuviolin · May 21

Honored to perform with Rohan De Silva for the 2021 @AmsDialogue, an international conference working towards the goals of conflict resolution and accountability with the participation of peace mediators, rights advocates, and leadership from intergovernmental organizations.



United Nations

THE ORGANISERS



Crisis Group provides independent analysis and advice on how to prevent, resolve or better manage deadly conflict. Crisis Group combines expert field research, analysis and engagement with policymakers across the world in order to effect change in crisis situations.



The Dialogue Advisory Group is an independent organisation that facilitates political dialogue to reduce violence. DAG creates or advances political dialogues between armed groups, governments and international organisations in conflict situations.



Human Rights Watch defends the rights of people worldwide. It scrupulously investigates abuses, exposes the facts widely, and pressures those with power to respect rights and secure justice.

We would like to sincerely thank ASIM GORASHI, MONA MADGI and band, as well as KEVIN ZHU and ROHAN DE SILVA for their fantastic musical accompaniment during the Amsterdam Dialogue 2021.

Thanks also to TITWANE for the wonderful illustrations and live drawing that breathed life into the online conference.

