

Policy, Power and Sectarian Identities in the MENA Region

Chatham House, London | Tuesday 31 March 2015

08.30-09.00 *Registration and Coffee*

09.00-09.30 Welcome and Introduction

09.30-10.45 Session 1: Understanding Sectarian Dynamics
This panel will provide an overview of how sectarianism has evolved over the past two decades; examine the role played by religious institutions, political movements and civil society organisations in fomenting or countering sectarian narratives; and identify the key figures that have shaped the debate.

10.45-11.15 *Coffee*

11.15-12.30 Session 2: Socioeconomic Factors
This session will assess the role that socio-economic factors play in either supporting or undermining popular narratives of sectarianism. It will focus on the increasing levels of social and economic grievance felt across the region; tensions between state and society; and the complex interplay between national and transnational identities. This session will consider how these issues are used to reinforce sectarianism, as well as look at examples where greater socio-economic equity has reduced sectarian tensions.

12.30-13.30 *Lunch*

13.30-14.45 Session 3: Sectarianism and Regional Politics
This panel will examine the role played by states, non-state actors, religious bodies and others, in instrumentalising sectarianism to pursue their wider domestic and regional objectives.

14.45-15.15 *Coffee*

15.15-16.30 Session 4: Contesting Sectarian Representations in the Media
This panel will analyse how sectarian conflict is portrayed in the media and the role this plays in informing public debate on the issue. It will also consider the impact that both regional and international media institutions can have either in reinforcing or countering exclusionary identity politics.

16.30-17.30 Session 5: Solutions and Recommendations
This session will focus on what counter-measures can be taken in terms of policies and actions. Where have attempts at conflict resolution been made and have they had a positive impact?

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