

Bassma Kodmani

Co-founder and Executive President of the Arab Reform Initiative



Bassma Kodmani is a co-founder of the Arab Reform Initiative and serves as its Executive Director since 2005. She is also Associate Professor of International Relations at Paris University, currently on leave from her post.

She has served as senior adviser on international cooperation at the French National Research Council (2007-09), Associate Senior Research Fellow at CERI-Sciences Po (2006-07), adviser to the director of the Académie Diplomatique Internationale (2007-2009) and Senior Visiting Fellow at the Collège de France (2005-06). From 1998 to 2005, she served as Senior Program Officer for Governance and International Cooperation at the Ford Foundation office for the Middle East and North Africa in Cairo where she was in charge of support to research institutions, NGOs and public agencies in the region. From 1981 to 1998, she established and directed the Middle East Program at the Institut Français des Relations Internationales (IFRI) in Paris. She has extensive experience in track II negotiations.

In 2011, she took a temporary leave from the Arab Reform Initiative to take on a mission as Head of Foreign Relations and spokesperson with the Syrian National Council, the opposition coalition seeking democratic change in Syria. She resigned from that role in 2012. In 2016, she joined the delegation of the democratic opposition in the Geneva peace talks on Syria. She is also the co-founder and treasurer of the Initiative for a New Syria, an NGO based in Paris which supports democratic civil society in Syria.

Dr Kodmani holds a PhD in Political Science from Sciences-Po in Paris. She is the author or editor of seven books on Middle East conflicts and politics and publishes regularly in academic journals and the Arab and international media. She writes on the Syrian conflict, regional security, political developments in Arab societies, security institutions, religious authority and political authority in the Muslim world and the question of Palestine. Her book on the Palestinian Diaspora (in French) was awarded the prize of Association France-Palestine in 1998. She regularly lectures in Arab and European academic institutions and policy forums. Dr Kodmani is a member of the Board of the United Nations University and of the Euro-Mediterranean

Foundation for Human Rights. She serves on the Advisory Boards of the European Council on Foreign Relations, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Middle East Center and International IDEA in Stockholm.

She was awarded the Légion d'Honneur of France as Chevalier in 2012, and the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy in 2011 for her role in developing the Arab Reform Initiative and promoting democracy in the wake of the Arab Spring.

Dr Kodmani was born in Damascus, Syria and currently lives in Paris.