



# ANNUAL REPORT

2019



# REFLECTING ON 2019

In 2019, a new era of human rights and democracy began for Africa and the Middle East. Young women and men in Sudan, Algeria, Uganda, Lebanon, Iraq and across the region strategically, creatively and nonviolently led mass movements for basic rights and freedoms for all, against all odds, and in the face of brutal crackdowns.

Building a better world for all by empowering African and Middle Eastern young leaders committed to human rights values is the mission that motivated AMEL's creation and continues to guide our work each and every day. To name just a few highlights, in 2019 we trained 100 civil society activists in 32 countries across the region through the AMEL Institute, and we helped to protect thousands of young leaders and raised their voices and causes across the global north. We advocated for American and European actions in the Middle East and Africa to be aligned with human rights values and to support local youth-led movements for greater rights, freedom and inclusion. We catalyzed cooperation among diverse communities, engaged audiences of more than 6,200 and trained nearly 300 changemakers on inclusion and allyship.

We are so grateful for every single member of the AMEL community and look forward to continuing our work together as we expand our programs and increase our impact. We have great hope for the coming year and decade, as 2019 has shown us the enormous progress that can be made through strategic, savvy and sustained efforts by young people in Africa and the Middle East. The generational shift they are leading can fundamentally transform the region in favor of greater freedoms, pluralism and democracy - let's redouble our collective and intersectional efforts to support and empower them so that it will.

**Mohamed Abubakr**

President



**Megan Hallahan**

Executive Director



# 2019 MILESTONES

Among the milestones reached in 2019 include the following, and much more - read on for details!

TRAINED

100

YOUNG  
LEADERS

FROM

70

TOWNS &  
CITIES

ACROSS

32

COUNTRIES  
OF MEA

INCREASED

2500+

ACTIVISTS'  
SAFETY

REACHED

400

LEADERS  
IN US/EU

INSPIRED

6500

IN DIVERSE  
AUDIENCES

OVER

17,900

ONLINE  
NETWORK

REACHING

881K

MORE  
PEOPLE

ACROSS

50+

COUNTRIES  
WORLDWIDE

# THE AMEL INSTITUTE (AMELI)

The AMEL Institute is a new program that innovates upon decades of experience by AMEL's Leadership in training and empowering young people across the Middle East and Africa (MEA). To test the scalable model and specific needs, a pilot program was conducted between February and June 2019 for **100 young leaders** (aged 18-36). Trainees in the online program were human rights and civil society activists from 70 towns and cities across **32 countries in the Middle East and Africa**, with 51% identifying as male, 48% as female and 1% as transgender.

## OBJECTIVE I

EMPOWER THE YOUNG GENERATION OF ACTIVISTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA WITH PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS SO THAT THEY CAN DO THEIR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISM MORE SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY.

## OBJECTIVE II

TRANSFER KNOW-HOW FROM EXPERIENCED ACTIVISTS AND EXPERTS TO BRAVE AND CREATIVE YOUNG PEOPLE, IN THE MEA REGION, WHO ARE TAKING ACTION TO BUILD MORE INCLUSIVE, SAFE AND RESILIENT SOCIETIES.

## OBJECTIVE III

EQUIP ACTIVISTS WITH SKILLS AND NETWORKS TO HELP ACTIVISTS STEP UP THEIR CHANGEMAKING LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY, WHILE CREATING MOMENTUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, PLURALISM AND DEMOCRACY REGIONALLY AND GLOBALLY.

*"I believe that the AMEL Project has been a major step in my activism journey. Setting objectives of sharing knowledge and shaping up my activism and safety toolkit have been a goal behind applying for this program. AMEL Project taught me tactics to give impact throughout engagement, while coping with self care...I've tackled different issues that I've learned during this fruitful experience, as the revolution in Algeria was simultaneous to the learning process and I've seen myself taking the notes into daily practice."*

- Trainee from Algeria

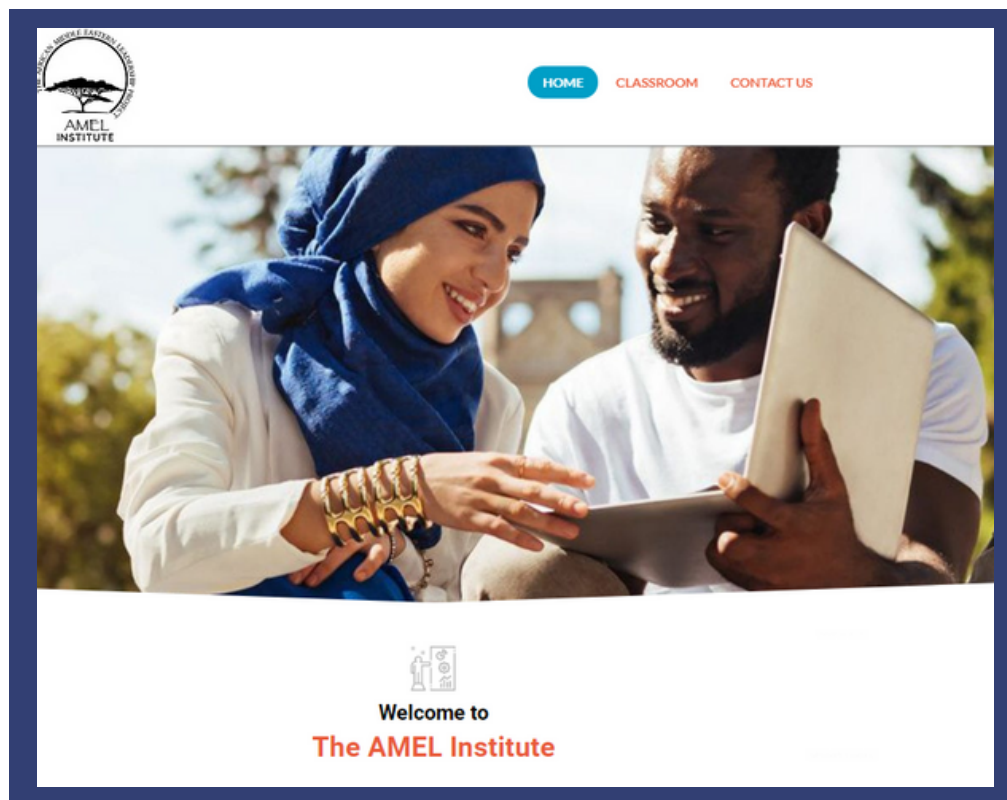
## AMEL INSTITUTE TOPICS

The Pilot Program focused on online training to fill key knowledge and skill gaps through video lectures given by experienced activists and top experts on the topics of:

- Human Rights Activism & Advocacy
- Safety For Activists (on- and off-line)
- Stress, Trauma & Self-care for Activists
- Holocaust Education & Genocide Prevention
- Conflict Transformation & Peace
- Democratic Development

## THE AMEL TRAINING MODEL

Training was conducted through a password-protected classroom on [www.amelinstitute.org](http://www.amelinstitute.org) where trainees had access to video lectures, discussion forums and written material. Every other week, for 12 weeks, a new set of training videos was published for activists to watch in preparation for the live online (webinar) discussion with the lecturer. Additional resources including articles, toolkits and studies were provided for each of the 6 topics and ongoing discussions in the online forum further explored the topics through peer-to-peer learning. A capstone assignment concluded the program and certificates and letters of recommendation were issued to all participants who completed the program.



***“As a Human Rights Activist who is very passionate about human rights and child education, the program has empowered change-makers like me to Shape Africa’s Future..I believe if we are to see the Africa we want, we need to rise up and take charge of societies around us. It is only through such programs that we are empowered, directly developing the best in us - ethics, and skills in order to flourish and reach our full potential.”***

**-Trainee from Uganda**

## AMEL INSTITUTE IMPACT

Overall, the Pilot Program had an overwhelmingly positive impact on participants and provided proof of concept for our scalable model. A full impact report is available on [www.amelprojet.org/institute](http://www.amelprojet.org/institute), and highlights include:



97%

### OF RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT:

- the program gave them the knowledge and skills to be better activists;
- they can now better protect themselves; and
- they are now more effective as activists.



JUST UNDER  
70%

### OF RESPONDENTS RATED:

- the program as "Life Changing!" (7 out of 7) or one rank below "Life Changing!" (6 out of 7).



85%

### OF RESPONDENTS SAID:

- that they learned "How to be a better human rights activist".



OVER  
91%

### OF RESPONDENTS HAVE:

- already used what they have learned in their activism or life.

*"The course pushed me to dig deeper into genocide history and prevention. The personal story of [Holocaust survivor] Jimmy Lichtman moved me. Through this lesson, I came to realize how dangerous prejudice and hatred are as possible roots for mass violence and genocide in societies. All that I have learned so far will definitely help me take my civic engagement to the next level. I think I will focus more on working on actions and projects related to peacebuilding. I will try to fight hate speech and prejudice among youth by implementing peacebuilding programs."*

- Trainee from Tunisia

# ACTIVIST SAFETY & SECURITY



Throughout 2019, AMEL worked to connect activists with tools, tactics and networks that can help them carry out their activism more safely and effectively. In particular, AMEL partnered with Google's Advanced Protection Program (APP) which protects Gmail/Google Drive accounts from targeted, digital attacks. This protection is especially important for high-risk users—like activists, journalists, executives, members of political campaign teams, government employees, diplomats, advocates, disruptors and others in the public eye.

Partnering with Atlas Corps, the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), the Sudanese American Public Affairs Association, among others, AMEL provided more than 2,000 young activists, leaders, journalists, influencers, etc. with APP devices and instruction on how to utilize the device as part of their digital hygiene and safety. The AMEL Institute Pilot Program also included lessons on digital security and access to toolkits and other resources on activism and digital security.



# AMEL ADVOCACY & ALLYSHIP

AMEL's Advocacy & Allyship efforts are centered on improving engagement with Africa and the Middle East by building understanding, relations and cooperation based on shared human rights values. In 2019, AMEL's efforts focused on advocating in relation to the historic democratic movements and transitions in Sudan and neighboring countries, as well as on building allyship among Muslim, Jewish and other diverse communities.

## ADVOCACY AROUND SHARED VALUES - THE SUDAN CASE

In April 2019, Omar Al-Bashir, the brutal dictator who had ruled Sudan for 30 years, was ousted and a new era of democracy began in Sudan. This was the result of mass uprisings over 9 months led by young Sudanese women and men who demanded freedoms and democracy, and engaged in nonviolent, continual and strategic pressure to strengthen the hand of their representatives (the Forces of Freedom and Change-FFC, a coalition of civilian parties and civil society groups). A Draft Constitutional Declaration, which was signed by the Transitional Military Council and the FFC on August 17th, instituted power-sharing between the military and a civilian technocratic government until general elections in 2022.



Throughout 2019, AMEL worked with a coalition of Sudanese Americans and other advocates to inform U.S. and European leaders about the status and needs of the young activists on the frontlines of this historic movement in Sudan and how it could be supported. AMEL advocacy focused on providing updated information and analysis as well as recommendations for signals and other cost-effective measures that leaders in the global north could enact or support. In this way, they were able to quickly provide encouragement and momentum for the shared human rights and democratic values that the Sudanese people put their lives on the line for, and which inspired activists in countries across the region to advance similar movements (in Algeria, Chad, Iraq, Lebanon and beyond).



Continually plugged in to the ecosystem of activists on the frontlines of the democratic movement in Sudan, AMEL President Mohamed Abubakr briefed a variety of audiences and institutions throughout the year about the protests, strikes, crackdowns and related developments in Sudan and the surrounding region. The briefings provided updated information, useful context, perspectives from the human rights activism lens, as well as the pulse and priorities of the increasingly young population. According to the United Nations 75% of the population in Sudan is under the age of 35 and there are similar demographics across the Middle East and Africa. This is causing a generational shift as the overwhelming majority has come of age in a globalized and digitized world, giving them a more open-minded set of values and priorities. AMEL thus worked throughout 2019 to bridge understanding and information gaps about this changing landscape in Sudan, and across the region, and the challenges and opportunities it presents.

Among others, updates and briefings were provided to:

- The State Department (Africa Bureau, Democracy, Human Rights & Labor Bureau)
- The Congressional International Religious Freedom Caucus (IRFC) and various Congressional offices;
- Diplomats at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva;
- U.S. civil society groups as well as the wider public in cities including Washington DC and San Francisco;
- American and international media (see page 13-14)



*From right to left: Mansour Al-Hadj (Middle East Media and Research Institute), Rep. Gus Bilirakis, Mohamed Abubakr (AMEL President) and Dr. Ashraf Abu Affan (Civil Forces Assembly and Sudanese American Physicians Association) at Bipartisan IRFC briefing on June 13, 2019.*

AMEL also played a key role in a coalition that helped build the advocacy capacity of dozens of young Sudanese American and other MEA diaspora in the U.S., and which led in rallies and other public events to raise awareness about the democratic movements in Sudan and neighboring countries.

## **BRIDGING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**

Another focus of AMEL's advocacy work centers on building understanding, relations and allyship between diverse communities. In 2019, this work included engaging with Muslim and Jewish activists and groups in the U.S. and Europe, and working on issues of common concern to those communities. For example, AMEL provided insights on anti-Semitism in the MEA region, and about Islamophobia and other forms of intolerance around the world to various groups and institutions, including the State Department.

AMEL also served as an Incubator for the **Inter Jewish Muslim Alliance (IJMA)**, which brings together American Muslim and Jewish civil society leaders and allies to model the ideals of pluralism and equality for all, while taking action to further the rights of all Americans to freedom of religion and conscience. IJMA convened a series of working meetings in the first half of 2019 to develop this Alliance and a Statement of Principles and Values to guide its work.

Diving immediately into the core issues, IJMA held a workshop in June 2019 for Alliance members to explore together the misperceptions and bigotry faced by, and between, the Jewish and Muslim communities in America as well as steps for addressing them. To share experience with European counterparts, in November an IJMA delegation participated in the Trans-Atlantic Muslim-Jewish Alliance with German civil society leaders tackling the rise of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim bigotry across the global north. Publicly launching with a conference in December 2019 at the Freedom Forum of the Newseum, IJMA brought together more than 100 guests to explore intercommunal relations as well as engagement and educational approaches for building mutual understanding, countering voices of hatred and bigotry within communities and working together across faiths for common interests.



AMEL also shared its space and experiences with the interfaith group of Delegates of **New Story Leadership (NSL)**. Working to equip a new generation of Palestinian and Israeli change agents with the skills needed to create social, economic and political change in the region, NSL brings a select group of Delegates to Washington DC for an annual summer program on public speaking and leadership. AMEL hosted several of the training sessions of the 2019 Delegates - in between their work placements in Congressional offices and their speaking engagements on the Hill and beyond - and shared with them know-how on activism, advocacy and social impact projects, based on AMEL Leadership experiences in Sudan and the wider MEA region.



## AMPLIFYING NEW VOICES - THE AMEL SPEAKERS BUREAU

AMEL's Advocacy & Allyship portfolio also includes our Speakers Bureau, which empowers young diaspora leaders to bring new voices to the discourse in the global north. With first-hand experience in the Middle East and Africa, but also in the United States, diaspora bring enriching and compelling voices to a variety of audiences in order to build awareness, understanding and allyship. Below are some highlights of this work in 2019.

In February 2019, an AMEL delegation provided a series of talks and sessions at the BBYO International Conference, which brought together over 5,000 Jewish teen leaders, philanthropists, thought leaders and more. AMEL Speaker Bnyad Sharef (from Iraq) shared his story with a diverse group of participants and led a workshop together with fellow AMEL Speaker Cedric Nwafor (from Cameroon). Their workshop was an interactive session on Storytelling, Public Narrative and Leadership, using their own stories as examples of how personal narratives can be transformed into public speeches that can motivate others to action for a common purpose. In a parallel breakout session, AMEL President Mohamed Abubakr and Executive Director Megan Hallahan led a workshop on how to stop the pyramid of hate by building allyship among diverse groups and communities.



A few weeks later, on March 6, 2019, Bnyad was featured in a panel at the City University of New York (CUNY) exploring the immigrant experience and how activists are taking action to protect the rights of other immigrants and refugees in the U.S. Bnyad's story of immigration amidst the Travel Ban had captivated audiences the previous October during the National Refugee Shabbat at the Bnai Keshet synagogue in Montclair, NJ, which led to the invitation to speak at CUNY, where he shared his story with students, faculty and the wider public.

All throughout the year, other speaking engagements provided opportunities for various AMEL Speakers to share their insights and experiences with diverse audiences, for example:

- **Isaac Cudjoe (AMEL Speaker from Ghana)** at Brandeis University in Boston and at the Seneca Valley High School Commencement;
- **Ruwan Al-Rejoleh (AMEL Speaker from Syria)** at NEXUS Global Summit-NY;
- **Cedric Nwafor (AMEL Speaker from Cameroon)** at the Evening of Dignity in San Francisco and the University of Maryland (UMD) Global Collective Conference;
- **Mohamed Abubakr (AMEL President)** at Temple Emanu-El (SF) and Stanford;
- **Megan Hallahan (AMEL Executive Director)** at the UMD Global Collective Conference, Stanford Heyns Forum, and New York University Annual IPSA Summit.



Thus, in addition to the 300 young leaders trained in aforementioned activities, AMEL Speakers and Leadership shared their unique insights and inspiring stories with another 6,200 diverse audience members on topics ranging from human rights, to peace & security, from combatting discrimination, to combatting food insecurity, from women's empowerment, to interfaith engagement, and much more.



# MEDIA & RECOGNITION

AMEL insights and activities were featured in local, national and international media outlets throughout 2019. For example, on April 11, 2019 [CNN International's John Vause](#) interviewed AMEL President Mohamed Abubakr about the ousting of Omar Al-Bashir - the dictator who brutally ruled Sudan for 3 decades - and the movement that had been taking to the streets for 5 months pressuring for his regime to be replaced with civilian, democratic rule.



On May 17th AMEL Advisory Board Members Larry Diamond and Anne Pence teamed up with Mohamed to publish an article in **The American Interest** entitled: *Sudan on the Cusp of Democratic Change*, exploring the unprecedented movement for democracy and its impact.

## FEATURED



### [Sudan On The Cusp Of Democratic Change](#)

by [Larry Diamond](#), [Anne Pence](#), [Mohamed Abubakr](#) via [The American Interest](#)  
Friday, May 17, 2019

On June 11th, Mohamed was interviewed on Turkish television channel **TRT World** together with political activist Ahmed Muglad and, on the opposing side, Albashir's confidant and Former Senior Advisor for Ministry of Information, Rabie Abdel Atti.



# MEDIA & RECOGNITION



## Newly united, Sudanese Americans push for civilian rule in Sudan



Dimah Mahmoud and Mohamed Abubakr participate in a rally for Sudan on the Mall last Saturday. (Jay Westcott//For The Washington Post)

In January 2019, AMEL was honored with a certificate of **Special Congressional Recognition** for outstanding and invaluable service to the community awarded by the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, Hon. Nancy Pelosi.

Among other media highlights, AMEL President Mohamed Abubakr was quoted in the [article](#) "Sudan Demonstrators Vow to Take Protests to Europe and US: 'This Is Our Last Chance'" published by British news outlet **The Independent** on May 2, 2019. The article explored the mass, nonviolent protests taking place in Sudan and beyond to pressure for a civilian-led government. On July 26, 2019, the **Washington Post** published an [article](#) about Sudanese Americans (estimated at 44,000 across the country) who mobilized to support the democratic uprising in Sudan and respond to the brutal crackdowns on it. The article highlighted the advocacy work that AMEL was engaged in together with other Sudanese diaspora activists.



# SUPPORTERS, PARTNERS & FRIENDS

## Thank You to AMEL Supporters, including:

- Covington & Burling
- Grossman Young & Hammond
- Google
- The Libitzky Family Foundation
- The Goodman Family Supporting Foundation of the Jewish Community Foundation of the East Bay
- The Rob & Eileen Ruby Fund of the Jewish Community Foundation of the East Bay
- Schwab Charitable
- Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in the United States
- BBYO
- Institute for International Education
- Marcia's Light Foundation
- Anti-Defamation League
- All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS)
- HIAS
- Benevity
- AmazonSmile
- **And hundreds of generous individuals all over the world!**

## Thank You AMEL Partners & Friends, including:

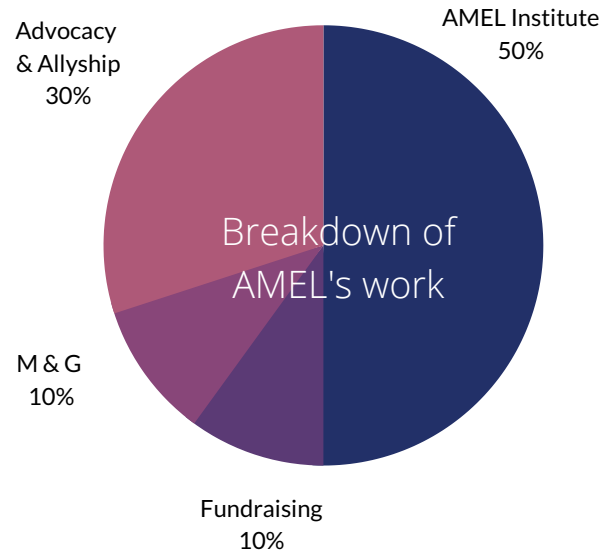
- Advocacy Assembly
- Afrika Youth Movement
- Agir Localement Militer Activement association
- Atlas Corps
- Bridges to Academic Success
- Chapter Four Uganda
- City University of New York
- Connecting Actions
- Inter Jewish Muslim Alliance (IJMA)
- Millennial Action Project
- Muslim-Jewish Conference
- National Investments for Africa
- New Story Leadership
- ReTurn
- ROOTS Africa
- Stanford University
- Sudanese American Public Affairs Association
- Sudanese Diaspora Network
- Sudanese American Physicians Association
- Together We Remember
- Yemen Peace Project
- **And thousands of activists across the globe!**



# LOOKING FORWARD TO 2020

In 2020, AMEL will expand its work to:

- **Train young civil society activists** from the Middle East and Africa to operate more safely and effectively and to prepare for ascending into leadership positions;
- **Advocate for the universal human values** that unite young activists in MEA with activists, leaders and the wider public in the U.S. and across the global north, and **catalyze** understanding, allyship, resilience and social cohesion.



Among our quantitative goals are:

## 250

ACTIVISTS TRAINED  
IN AMEL INSTITUTE

## 16

NEW LESSONS IN  
INSTITUTE CURRICULUM

## 150%

INCREASE IN NETWORK  
IN MEA, US & EU