

# Media Packet

Presented by  
Arab Reform Initiative and Sharq.Org on behalf of  
**The Arab Region Hub for Social Protection**



inviting you to engage with and asking you to support the newly launched annual campaign

## **'26 Days of Activism for Social Protection'**

which runs between  
7 April (World Health Day) and 1 May (Labor Day)  
and aims to raise awareness of and discussion around issues related to social protection, including

Health

Inequality & Vulnerabilities

Community & Collaboration

Universal Social Protection

Livelihoods

## Story Ideas

Below are but a few suggestions for story angles. We would be delighted if you would support our efforts to bring social protection to the fore by producing and publishing a report, be it based on one of these ideas or others, which we would be happy to brainstorm with you.

A look at the short, medium and long term impact of various government policies during the unprecedented pandemic and its impact on security and vulnerability.

The ramifications of the health crisis on standard of living.

A look at a specific vulnerability group and the inequalities that hinder their prosperity.

A review of the various social protection policies adopted or amended since the Arab Spring, which grew from.

Growing collaboration between activists and academics to enhance knowledge of and lobbying for effective and just social protection policies.

The feasibility and projected impact of Basic Universal Income in the Arab region.

Why universal protection mechanisms are more effective than targeted ones despite evident inequalities.

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**The Arab Region Hub for Social Protection** was established in 2021 by eight founding partners, including think tanks and media outlets, with the support of IDRC. Hub instigator and custodian [Arab Reform Initiative](#) and Hub communication partner Sharq.Org have developed a campaign aimed at enhancing understanding of social protection among the public and collaborative initiatives among researchers and policy makers.

# Press Release

Arab Reform Initiative (ARI) is launching a new campaign to enhance awareness, visibility and collaboration around issues and challenges related to social protection in the Arab region.

Entitled ‘26 Days of Activism for Social Protection,’ the campaign will run between 7 April (World Health Day) and 1 May (Labor Day) 2023. Efficient and just social protection policies and mechanisms are designed to mitigate against risks to health and livelihoods, as well as education, shelter and other basic needs that contribute to wellbeing. The social contract between residents and the State dictates that the latter is responsible for ensuring access to healthcare and income security for the former, and yet, given the limited manifestations of democracy in the Arab region, social contracts are either non-existent or extremely frail. In turn, fair, integrated and effective social protection schemes are scarce, and those that do exist are often inadequate, exclusionary and subject to clientelistic networks, leaving people unprotected from political, socio-economic and environmental shocks as well as multifaceted crises, of which there have been many in the region.

At ARI, we envision an Arab region in which all people, regardless of their identities, are guaranteed social protections that secure their access to the essential goods and services needed to ensure a decent standard of living, which sequentially gives them the opportunity to prosper and contribute as active members of society. To this end, we run a program dedicated to building universal social protection systems in the region; instigated and are the custodian of the Arab Region Hub for Social Protection; and are launching this new annual campaign.

We hope that the campaign will focus attention on the need to shift away from short-term social assistance programs, especially those financed by debt, and reflect on how to envisage and implement alternative policies that reduce growing inequalities and shield people from loss of livelihood implications.

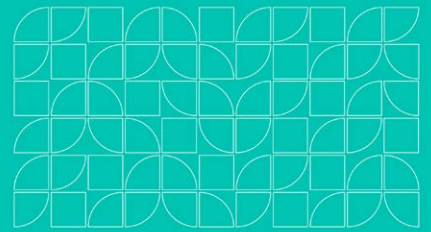
We invite all activists, journalists, researchers, practitioners, decision makers and the public as a whole to support this campaign and its call for equitable, inclusive and sustainable social protection policies and programs that the vast majority of people in the Arab region are in dire need of.

A social protection system must cover nine principal branches: medical care, sickness, unemployment, old age, employment injury, family, maternity, invalidity and survivors' benefits.



The collateral effects of the pandemic go far beyond the health sector.

Afef Hammami Marrakchi,  
Professor at Sfax Faculty of Law



Social protection is a right. It should be translated and institutionalized — to enable its application and realization — through effective, universal social protection systems.

Adib Nehme,  
Expert on poverty and development



Low pay has fuelled [brain drain](#) over the years.

Of the

220,000

Registered Doctors

about

120,000

Work Outside Egypt

Throughout the campaign, we will be highlighting core messages and information shared by specialists and stakeholders at events hosted by the Hub and in articles and research papers published by Hub partners. No less than 200 quotes and statistics will be shared on our social media platforms. An overview of all messages is available upon request to support your development of an article or report.

During the campaign, we will also be launching new assets produced by the Hub, including:

- Five thematic campaign videos each highlighting the impact of an absence of effective social protection systems
- An oral history collection of interviews conducted with people from different vulnerable groups
- A knowledge library to support researchers, journalists and policy makers seeking to more information

We are on hand to support the development of your report in any way possible, including introducing you to and helping to organise interviews with specialists in the field and with people impacted by inequality and vulnerabilities.



Most workers are not searching for freedom from work but rather for freedom through work or freedom at work.

Julia Choucair Vizoso  
Non-resident Senior  
Fellow, ARI



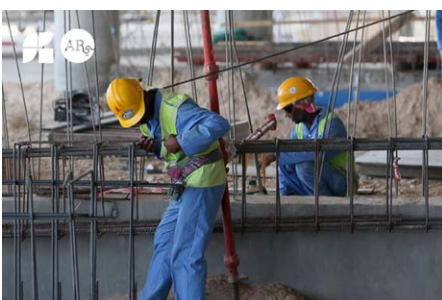
COVID-19 exposed the long-standing vulnerability of

**35,000,000**  
migrants

working in GCC countries, who faced a wave of precariousness, mass redundancies, forced repatriation, uncertainty, and a subsequent slump of remittance flows during the pandemic.

Although private clinics sign collective agreements with health authorities to set rates that are aligned with those of public hospitals, they unfortunately rarely respect this price cap.... The price for the room, food, etc., can easily be abused.

Karim Chayata,  
President, Tunisian Right to Health Association



Several GCC countries used the pandemic to accelerate their efforts to reduce their migrant workforces by expanding workforce nationalization schemes.

## Timeliness

The 26-day campaign has been developed around five intersecting themes. We invite you to develop an article or report to support the campaign and help raise awareness around the critical issue of social protection. Though the issue is timeless and worthy of attention every day of the year, two upcoming dates provide a media hook that may support your pitch to editors.

### May 1<sup>st</sup> Labor Day

Social protection ensures access to healthcare and income security for all. This is why our campaign runs between World Health Day and Labor Day. With livelihood and work a core element of social protection, Labor Day is an ideal hook for any report.

### May 16<sup>th</sup> International Day of Living Together in Peace

Inequalities, of which there are many in the region and beyond, hinder peace and prevent people from living together harmoniously. Many policy proposals for social protection mechanisms focus on vulnerabilities, inequalities, and universality.



People or Profit?  
Who should be  
responsible for your  
healthcare?

The government  
or private sector?

#egypt #lebanon #tunisia  
#pricescaps #profit  
#universalinsurance



Social protection in  
Lebanon is not at zero.  
It is below zero.

Imane Fathallah,  
Unionist



Women make up

70%

of the Tunisian agricultural  
workforce but are paid around

50%

less than men and have very  
limited access to social protection



There are laws and there are rights. It is the role of  
unions, associations, charities, civil society, to create  
a social alliance that can lobby for rights.  
Rights are taken, not given.

Castro Abdallah,  
President, Federation of Trade Union of  
Workers and Employees in Lebanon (FENASOL)



The role of journalism is to shed light on crises, on  
the status of vulnerable groups, the steps and  
policies taken by government and concerned parties,  
holding the state accountable, following up on its  
work, and evaluating or presenting the effectiveness  
of policies and decisions taken.

Sana Siblani,  
Former Project Manager, Daraj Media



The State is evading its  
responsibility of being  
not only a referee but  
also a major funder of  
social protection  
schemes.

Farah Al Shami  
Social Protection Program Director



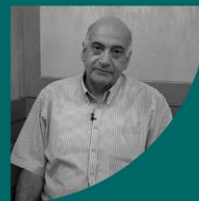
There is no social protection policy in this  
region, only interventions. Social policy includes  
social protection at its core and must also  
include human development as well as  
eradication of poverty through economic  
policies such as redistribution of wealth.

Howaida Roman  
Professor of Political Science,  
National Center for Social Research



The Lebanese State, when devising a targeted  
social protection plan, failed to listen to the  
advice of all the Lebanese experts that said such  
a program is not suitable for Lebanon.

Adib Nehme,  
Expert in Development, ANND Affiliate



When we speak of political participation, we are not  
speaking about a luxury or desire or intention; we are  
speaking of a condition of success in achieving  
justice, be it in social protection or health systems.

Ziad Abdel Samad,  
Executive Director,  
Arab NGO Network for Development

Contact Us  
For more information  
and support developing  
your story.

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