

חֲדָרַת פְּזָאִימָה סִינַאטִין

TODAY'S MIDDLE EAST POWER POLITICS PLAYERS

HIGHLIGHTS

from the 39th Annual Camden Conference
February 20 - 22, 2026



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(as of March 2026)

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Every winter for nearly 40 years, the Camden Conference has brought the world to Maine. Internationally famous diplomats, outstanding academic leaders, and great journalists come to Camden to examine a pressing issue of global scope. (Obviously we do not cause the news, but some years we could be accused of it. Our 2022 Conference, *Europe: Challenged at Home and Abroad*, opened two days after Russia invaded Ukraine, and our recent 2026 Conference, *Today's Middle East: Power, Politics, Players*, closed just a week before war broke out in Iran.)

The 2026 Conference, *Today's Middle East: Power, Politics, Players*, sold out the Camden Opera House and drew good crowds at our livestream venues, the Strand Theater in Rockland and the Lunt Auditorium in Falmouth. Counting those live-streaming at home, the total audience exceeded a thousand, including more than 150 high school and college students in the seats at the Opera House and the Strand. Special thanks to those who support our education programs that are so important to the Camden Conference mission. We have ample evidence that every year we change the academic and career ambitions of some of these young Mainers.

While this Highlights publication celebrates the 2026 Conference, Community Events and Special Events, a lot has happened behind the scenes as well. We completely redesigned our website under the guidance of Peter Mattox, our superb operations manager. For the first time, we installed street pole signs in Camden during conference week, and we are producing a new promotional video. And, at the end of June we moved our office from the Camden National Bank building on Elm Street to the Downeast Building on Route One in (shh!) Rockport.

None of this could happen without the extraordinary Kimberly Scott, now in her 18th year as Camden Conference executive director. Special thanks to volunteer and Board member Mary Jo Bateman, who organized the arduous office move. And, of course nothing in the four decades of Camden Conference could have been achieved without the financial support of a very unusual community of civic-minded, globally attentive citizens. That's YOU! Take a bow!

This year we also lost two members of our extended Camden Conference family. Dave Jackson, a former Board member and longtime volunteer, brought decades of experience in maritime publishing and a deep love of the Midcoast to his years of service with us. Sarah Miller, a past Conference president, spent nearly fifty years as a journalist covering energy and world affairs before bringing that same insight and warmth to Camden Conference for nearly two decades. Both are deeply missed.

We look forward to seeing all of you—and hearing from you—February 19-21, 2027 at our 40th Conference, *Beyond the American Century: A New World Order?*

Matt Storin, *Camden Conference Board President*



MATT STORIN edited *The Boston Globe* (1993-2001) and held editor positions at the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *NY Daily News*, *Maine Times*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. His reporting included covering Congress, the White House, and Asia from Tokyo, including the wars in Cambodia and Vietnam. After the *Globe*, he was associate vice president for communications and journalism professor at Notre Dame. He retired in 2014 and lives in Camden.

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The 39th Camden Conference brought together an extraordinary group of thinkers at a genuinely extraordinary moment. The conversations that unfolded over three days in February proved as timely as any we have hosted in our nearly four decades. One week after our Conference concluded, the U.S. - Israel war on Iran began—a development several of our speakers had foreshadowed from the stage. We hope these Highlights capture something of that weekend for you.



Conference Moderator

MEGHNA CHAKRABARTI,
Host & Editor, *On Point*, NPR/WBUR

Meghna Chakrabarti made her debut as Moderator of the 39th Annual Camden Conference, bringing an impressive professional and educational resumé to the role. Chakrabarti serves as host and editor of the news and issues program *On Point* from NPR and WBUR, on the air Monday through Friday. She is the former host of *Radio Boston*, WBUR's acclaimed weekday show with a focus on news, in-depth interviews with extraordinary people, and analysis of broader issues that have an impact on Boston and beyond. Chakrabarti

has won awards for individual reporting from both the Associated Press and the Radio Television News Directors Association for her writing, hard news reporting, and use of sound. A former fellow at the Metcalf Institute for Environmental Reporting, Chakrabarti holds bachelor's degrees in civil and environmental engineering from Oregon State University (summa cum laude), a master's degree in environmental science and risk management from Harvard University, and an MBA with honors from Boston University.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: What Comes Next for the Middle East After the Gaza War?

WATCH
VIDEO



VALI NASR

Professor of International Affairs and Middle East Studies at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies

Keynote speaker Vali Nasr said the events in the Middle East in the past two years, since the Hamas attack

“Israel’s response to the October 7 attack went beyond a war against Hamas to address the Axis of Resistance as a whole.”

on Israel, have brought about fundamental changes to the region. Further, he said, “The Gaza war hasn’t finished.

The fate of Iran right now hangs in the balance.” Before October 7, 2023, there was a vision for the region of economic integration, the formation of trade corridors that would create prosperity along the way for the people of the region, and “the Arab countries of the Gulf saw this as very much in line with their own vision of post-oil economies.” The view was that you could contain and manage what’s bad in the Middle East and have “economic integration essentially define the region.” But Israel’s response to the October 7 attack went beyond a war against Hamas “to address, actually, the Axis of Resistance as a whole.” Israel mounted



operations in Lebanon against Hezbollah, Iran’s most important regional ally. The collapse of Hezbollah was followed by the fall of Syria, and Iran’s “pressure on the borders of Israel almost disappeared altogether,” leaving Israel the “uncontested military superpower in the region.”

A History of the Middle East: From Empire to Nation-States

WATCH
VIDEO



JOSHUA LANDIS

Director, Center for Middle East Studies, University of Oklahoma

“Before the French Revolution, there were no nation-states,” said Joshua Landis, beginning his history lesson on the Middle East, and “today, the world is covered with nation states.” A hundred nation-states were born between WWII and 1973, he said, and then began what he called “the great sorting out,” when minorities often get driven out. “It’s hard to change national borders,” he noted, so “the borders stay the same and people are changed to fit the borders.” Landis said the nation-states of the Middle

East were formed when the colonial powers divided up the northern Middle East. France and Britain drew the borders of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine, “and in every one of those states,” Landis said, “they privileged a minority. It’s divide

“A hundred nation-states were born between WWII and 1973 and then began ‘the great sorting out,’ when minorities often get driven out.”

and rule.” Eventually the minority regimes are violently pushed out and the majority takes over with “very bad consequences for the minorities.” In the war of 1948, the Palestinians



“lost spectacularly” to the Zionists, who captured seventy-eight percent of Palestine, and “today they have the rest,” said Landis, noting that the Jewish people have been the only minority that have turned themselves into a majority.

The Middle East as I Have Witnessed It: A Lifetime in Photos

WATCH VIDEO



ROBIN WRIGHT

Author & Journalist, *The New Yorker*

"I want to share my Middle East with you," Robin Wright said as she began a pictorial tour of the region she has covered since 1973. The images she projected on the big screen at the Opera House comprised a visual

"What struck me was how many have died and how many are still dying for a conflict that is no closer to being solved than at any time since 1948."

history of what she has witnessed in the Middle East, and her camera most



often focused on the people of the region. As a chronicler of change in the Middle East, Wright said she has been struck by the gains of women, reflected particularly in the student populations. "Sixty-four percent of the university student body in Tehran and somewhere around sixty

percent in Saudi Arabia is female," she said. Some of her images recalled momentous events: the memorial in Tunisia to Mohamed Bouazizi, the fruit vendor whose self-immolation incited the Arab Spring uprisings; two young Egyptians, each blinded in one eye by pellets fired by police at protesters in Tahrir Square; an ISIS fighter who had trained suicide bombers, some as young as 12. At a cemetery, she said, "what struck me...was how many have died and how many are still dying for a conflict that is no closer to being solved than at any time since 1948."

Age of Erdoğan: What Explains the Dominance of Turkey's Longtime Leader?

WATCH VIDEO



SUZY HANSEN

Author & Journalist

How did Turkey under Erdoğan, "a poor kid from the back streets of Istanbul," go from aspiring democracy to autocracy? "How did he pull off such a feat?" asked Hansen. As mayor

"When a charismatic, populist authoritarian comes to power, only an entirely new politics or mode of political figure can defeat him."

of Istanbul in the 1990s, Erdoğan won popular support by improving transportation and utilities, and when he became prime minister, in 2003,

"it was a victory of the most democratic kind," said Hansen. The first seven years of Erdoğan's rule were very successful, and there was widespread optimism about Erdoğan. But though Turkey was part of NATO, the Turks "felt ostracized and even stigmatized by the West," Hansen said, and Erdoğan began to look away from Europe, to the Arab world, Africa and Russia. Then came the Arab Spring. Millions of Syrian refugees sought safety in Turkey, and ISIS was on the rise. Erdoğan, unnerved by these events and by a failed military coup attempt, gave himself emergency powers and began to systematically assault the institutions of Turkey's



democracy. "For a time under Erdoğan, Turks still had functional elections," said Hansen. "The opposition could have beaten him, but they failed to recognize...that when a charismatic, populist authoritarian comes to power, only an entirely new politics or mode of political figure can defeat him."

Saudi Arabia Under MBS: Ally, Partner, or Something Else?

WATCH
VIDEO



BERNARD HAYKEL

Professor of Near Eastern Studies,
Princeton University

Professor Haykel may be uniquely qualified to offer insights into Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, known as MBS. "I've played video games with him," said Haykel. "He's a big video gamer." The huge country ruled by MBS

"MBS has single-handedly transformed the country in the image of what he wants it to become."

holds about 23 to 25 percent of the proven reserves of oil in the



world. It sits on or near three major maritime straits. "So it is strategically extremely important, for its oil and for its geography," Haykel said. But MBS knows that the world's energy economy is becoming less dependent on oil, so by diversifying the economy and consolidating power "MBS has

single-handedly transformed the country in the image of what he wants it to become," said Haykel. Saudi Arabia, home to Mecca and Medina, is also the center of Islam, though MBS has taken religion off center stage. "Islam was the raison d'être of the country," said Haykel, and that led to extremists, and MBS saw this as "a really bad brand." He wanted to turn Saudi Arabia into a "normal country," so he took the religious police off the streets, crushed the jihadist movements and developed a nationalism based on the history of the royal family as the identity of the country.

Iran at a Crossroads

WATCH
VIDEO



SUZANNE MALONEY

Vice President and Director, Foreign
Policy Program, Brookings Institution

Dr. Maloney said the decades-long U.S. role in Iran was "fairly constructive" until 1953, when the U.S. helped oust Iran's prime minister and place the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza

Pahlavi, on the throne. The Shah's reforms were opposed by many entrenched interests and, in 1963, Maloney said, a little-known cleric named Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini denounced the Shah as "a miserable wretch and a puppet of American and Israeli interests." His subsequent arrest and detention set in motion the forces that would topple the Shah 15 years later. The U.S. failed to see it coming, said Maloney, and since then Washington has sought to engage diplomatically with Iran. Meanwhile, Iran was building a powerful network of proxy militias that extended from Lebanon to Pakistan. Iran's nuclear program, shuttered by the

"I remain profoundly skeptical that strikes on Iran are going to leave us in a more stable place."

1979 revolution, reemerged after Iran's war with Iraq. A decade of western diplomacy, covert action and sanctions culminated with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which President Trump later walked away from. The regime has for years been in "a slow-motion process of metastasis," Maloney said. "But the question is, what will military action accomplish? I remain profoundly skeptical that strikes on Iran are going to leave us in a more stable place."

Israel: Stuck Between Pariah and Superpower

WATCH
VIDEO

ETHAN BRONNER

Israel Bureau Chief and Senior Editor
for the Middle East at Bloomberg News

"When people say the Middle East, they think about, oh my God, Israel and its mistreatment of the Palestinians," said journalist Ethan Bronner. After the Hamas attack on

"In the past year the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange has been among the highest performers in the world and European countries are lining up to buy Israel's military technology."

October 7, 2023, he said, the students who demonstrated on college

campuses "see a state that's killed 72,000 people, in a war that seems to be a war of vengeance." But the view within Israel is very different, he said. "When you say to Israelis, an awful lot of ordinary people got killed, they'll say, well, that'll teach them to come and slaughter our people in their homes." Israel's apparent hegemony is not just military, he said, noting that in the past year the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange has been among the highest performers in the world, foreign investment is soaring, and European countries are lining up to buy Israel's military technology. After October 7th, Israel changed its defense doctrine. "All they need to know now is, do you have



the capacity to threaten me?" Bronner said. "If you do, I'm coming to get you." For many years Bronner believed "that the bulk of people of both societies wanted to live in some decent form of coexistence. And I'm afraid I can't say that anymore."

Building the Far Side of the Bridge: The Imperative of Imagining a Land for All

WATCH
VIDEO

OMAR DAJANI

Professor of International Law,
McGeorge School of Law,
University of the Pacific

Professor Dajani offered an equation that for more than seventy-five years has defied solution: "When you talk

about Palestine, it's the same place as Israel. When you talk about Israel, it's the same place as Palestine." Both Jews and Palestinians have an attachment to the entire space. Prof. Dajani quoted a colleague who observed that peace building and bridge building have something in common: "when you build a bridge, like when you build peace, you've got to build it from both sides, not just one." Current discussion, he said, focuses only on the near side of the bridge, on short-term considerations, "things like establishing a real ceasefire, humanitarian access and reconstruction in Gaza." He noted that more than six hundred Palestinians have been killed by

Israeli strikes since the current cease-fire began, adding to "the 72,000 who've died, over the last couple of years during the genocide."

"When you build a bridge, like when you build peace, you've got to build it from both sides, not just one."

Dajani stressed that it's necessary to give attention to the far side of the bridge—the work of imagining peace, of thinking through the norms, the institutions, the arrangements that can give it structure and can give it resonance and resilience. "I do remain convinced that peace is possible," he said.

Stateless Peoples and Peoples Without a State: Intersecting Crises in the Middle East and North Africa

STEPHANIE WILLIAMS

Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution's Center for Middle East Policy; Former UN Special Adviser on Libya

Career diplomat Stephanie Williams addressed the stateless peoples of the Middle East and North Africa

"The refugees are facing almost unimaginable hardships, so a very small investment in soft power will do us a great deal of good."

and the hardships they face. These are partly due, said Williams, to "the gutting of America's soft power by the

Trump administration and slashing of the funds for the international organizations." Among the stateless populations are 30 to 45 million Kurds, who are scattered mostly among Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Following the first Gulf War in 1991, Iraq's Kurds had several years of autonomy. When Syria was plunged into civil war, its enclave of Syrian Kurds enjoyed a period of self-rule that came to an end when the new Syrian government took power. "So, a very mixed bag for the Kurdish people," said Williams. "Periods of autonomy, but then the reassertion of central control." Other stateless groups include the Bidoon of Kuwait, the Berbers of Morocco and

WATCH
VIDEO



Algeria, and the Saharan Tuaregs, and of course, the Palestinians. Out of a global population of fifteen million, nearly six million are refugees, two million of them in Jordan along with perhaps a million Syrians. The refugees are facing almost unimaginable hardships, so a "very small investment in soft power, I think will do us a great deal of good," Williams said.

Between Hegemony and Multipolarity: The Middle East, U.S. Power, and a Changing World Order

JEFFREY FELTMAN

John C. Whitehead Visiting Fellow in International Diplomacy, Foreign Policy Program, Brookings Institution; Former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs

Ambassador Feltman framed his discussion by noting that "the Middle East is in flux, the wider international

"The post-WWII system that was built to safeguard peace is losing both relevance and support."

system is stumbling, and the United States is unwinding its own global

order." He said the region has divided into two competing alignments. "It's Israel and the UAE on the one side, it's Turkey and Saudi Arabia, often joined by Egypt and Qatar on the other side," he said, and the Trump administration's ability to bridge the gap between these two coalitions remains unproven. Take Syria, he said, which is in a fragile transition. "The Trump administration is all in behind interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa. Israel and the UAE are not." The rivalry of the two alliances, said Feltman, extends beyond the Middle East to Sudan and the Horn of Africa. "Sudan is now a primary battlefield in this contest,"

WATCH
VIDEO



he said. "Sudan is host of the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe right now." The post-WWII system that was built to safeguard peace is losing both relevance and support, Feltman said, and "we need to explore how to restore deterrence, how to deter the US and China from heading to war, and how to deter great powers from seizing territory or assets from weaker states."

Sunday morning panel discussion

WATCH
VIDEO



On the final morning of the 39th Camden Conference, winter weather reduced the panel to five: Jeffrey Feltman, Suzy Hansen, Stephanie Williams, Omar Dajani, and Joshua Landis, with Meghna Chakrabarti moderating.

Chakrabarti opened with a deceptively simple prompt: what do you fear about 2026, and what gives you hope? Fears ranged from Iran's collapse into civil war (Landis) and domestic electoral erosion (Dajani) to international impunity (Williams) and the abandonment of the principle that territory cannot be acquired by force (Feltman). Hansen feared "a catastrophic mistake, possibly in the form of a weapon, by our president." Hopes proved equally varied: a credible Iran deal (Feltman), Europe stepping into the vacuum left by the U.S. (Williams), renewed civic fight from the American people (Hansen), and a Syrian government that extends a lifeline to the country's minority groups (Landis).

Questions from the audience ranged widely. A Brewer High School student pressed Suzy Hansen on why media coverage so often strips the Middle East of cultural context. Hansen placed the blame squarely on editors who "do not have any faith in their readers." On social media, both Hansen and Williams were blunt: Hansen called it "an evil force" given the lawlessness of its ownership, while Williams described it as "a big driver of conflict" across the region.

An audience member asked Dajani plainly: what will happen to the Palestinians? Dajani was measured—"hopeful but not super optimistic"—while pointing to upcoming Israeli elections and a growing cohort of middle powers recognizing Palestinian statehood as potential openings. An audience member raised water scarcity; Landis noted that Turkey's twenty-three dams on the Euphrates have "starved both Syrians and Iraqis downstream," and Dajani tied water, energy, and climate change together as a core driver of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

An audience member asked whether the damage done to American credibility can be undone. Feltman was direct: "I don't think there's any chance of restoring the status quo ante. Rebuilding institutions is possible—rebuilding alliances is much harder." Landis added that America must learn to think in terms of balance of power rather than dominance: "The balance of power is key to long-term peace."

Chakrabarti closed by asking each panelist to speak directly to the young people in the room. Landis pointed to the Emirates' vision of stability and growth as a positive signal for the region. Hansen drew an unlikely lesson from Erdoğan—a leader who recognized what was missing in his country and built a politics around it. Dajani invoked historian Jill Lepore: "I don't have a lot of use for hope. But I do have a lot of use for determination." Williams saw the advancing role of women across the Middle East and North Africa as her chief ray of light. And Feltman ended with Sudan—the world's worst humanitarian crisis—where youth-run, community-organized emergency response rooms are providing grassroots medical care, food, and transportation. "I have real confidence that all of you are going to be able to find a way forward," he said, "because the Sudanese youth have done it."

Chakrabarti closed the Conference with a paraphrase of Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci: "Be a pessimist of the intellect and an optimist of the will."

What speakers and attendees are saying

Each year we ask our speakers and attendees to share their reflections. Here is what they said about the 39th Camden Conference.

"The Camden Conference is the most unique world affairs conference I have ever been to — the quality of the speakers, the enthusiasm of the audience, and the brilliance of the questions from both moderators and citizens alike are unparalleled. It is a fun, endlessly stimulating experience; I'd return again and again if I could."

— Suzy Hansen, Author & Journalist

"I really did not want the conference to end. My attention was riveted throughout." — Conference attendee

"The Camden Conference is a truly unique event because of the high quality of its programming, its remarkably efficient organization, and the wonderful conversations with a highly informed audience that asks perceptive questions. No matter how contentious or difficult the subject matter, the exchanges are honest, fact-based, and civil, despite differences in perspective and opinion."

— Bernard Haykel, Professor of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University

"The Camden Conference brings international policy issues and global challenges out of the traditional academic and government spaces and into a community setting where students and the public alike can engage directly with experts. It is rare to see a rural coastal community hosting such serious, important discussions." — Conference attendee

"Anyone lamenting that Americans outside Washington don't care about U.S. foreign policy should visit Camden, Maine in February for a bracing corrective. The Camden Conference crackles with engaged, sophisticated audiences and informed speakers, turning Maine's winter into a forum of ideas. As a 2026 speaker, I came away energized and hopeful, thanks to searching questions and thoughtful exchanges with everyone from students to retirees."

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



"I've been to about 15 Camden Conferences, and this was among the best." — Conference attendee

"My fellow speakers were thoughtful and open-minded with an eye on the big picture, making the event exciting and helpful not only to me as a practitioner in the field but to the welcoming audiences in the hall and online, a terrific mix of students, experts and interested citizens. The Middle East is a polarizing topic and it's to the credit of the organizers that this was a civil and productive set of lectures and conversations."

— Ethan Bronner, Israel Bureau Chief and Senior Editor for the Middle East, Bloomberg News

"My favorite weekend of the year — intellectually stimulating as issues are reframed by experts — plus always make new acquaintances that I enjoy!" — Conference attendee

"I found the Camden Conference to be an intellectually inspiring event, bringing together top thinkers on a subject of importance to world affairs in an intimate setting that allows for both thoughtful exposition and intimate discussion."

— Vali Nasr, Professor of International Affairs and Middle East Studies, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies

"These outstanding speakers helped make a very complex historical topic more understandable. It was fascinating to me that there were discussions on issues playing out in real time, leaving us with some unknowns about the future." — Conference attendee

"I was very honored to be invited to speak at the 39th annual Camden Conference. And what a well-organized, timely and relevant gathering, coming just one week prior to the launch of the US-Israel war on Iran. An absolutely stellar line-up of experts and a well-informed and passionate audience! This was a must-attend conference!"

— Stephanie Williams, Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution's Center for Middle East Policy; Former UN Special Adviser on Libya

"The Camden Conference gives hope." — Conference attendee

Camden Conference in the Classroom



One of the most rewarding parts of the Camden Conference is watching Maine students fill the seats at the Opera House and the Strand. More than 100 high schoolers attended the 2026 Conference through our flagship program, Camden Conference in the Classroom (CCC), which now reaches 15 high schools and 5 college partners statewide. CCC works with teachers to build coursework around each year’s Conference theme — and students often ask the sharpest questions of the weekend. Four schools independently cited speaker Omar Dajani’s line, “You can’t build a bridge from only one side,” as a lesson in civil disagreement as much as a lesson about the Middle East.

FULL LIST OF
PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS



Bill Taylor Essay Contest

Gould Academy senior Fritts Johnson took first prize in the Camden Conference’s annual Bill Taylor Essay Contest for “Preventing a Nuclear Iran Through Multilateral Diplomacy and Soft Power.” Gould classmates Ella Wilder and Eoin Sullivan took second and third; Julia Soelberg of Yarmouth High School won the alternate category. The contest, established in 2014 by Navy veteran and longtime Camden Conference volunteer Bill Taylor, invites CCC students to write on the Conference theme each year.

READ THE
WINNING ESSAYS



A Graduate Student’s Perspective

University of Maine SPIA graduate student Tyler Lissy offered his reflections on the 2026 Conference, organized around three themes: the tension between complicated and compressed histories, the distinction between power and threat, and the challenge of viewing the region with objectivity rather than insensitivity. It’s a reminder of what the Camden Conference offers students at every level — not easy answers, but rigorous engagement with the world’s hardest questions.

READ TYLER’S ESSAY



Community Events

In Maine libraries from Blue Hill to York, expert speakers presented talks that set the table for the February Conference, *Today's Middle East*. This year's 28 free community events at 15 partner libraries reached 976 Mainers—749 in person and online, plus another 227 through recordings—without a conference ticket. Speakers included professors from Harvard, Colby, Bates, Bowdoin,

and UMaine Orono; two former U.S. diplomats; a novelist, a rug expert, a food historian, and a trio of Middle Eastern instrumentalists, covering everything from rivers and refugees to a girl's coming of age in Tehran.

Former diplomat Norm Olsen delivered three talks on his time in Gaza, including one that drew 65 virtual viewers. A recorded Camden

talk reached 162 people online—seven times the size of the room it was recorded in. This year, for the first time, librarians and speakers received free digital access to the February Conference as thanks for their effort.

Many thanks to our volunteer Community Events Committee and the librarians across Maine who make these programs possible.

Special Events



Photo by Josh Povec

Camden Conference brought three standout events to Midcoast and Falmouth audiences this year, where journalism, documentary film, and comedy converged on the hard questions at the heart of *Today's Middle East*.

An Evening with Nick Schiffrin

PBS NewsHour correspondent Nick Schiffrin filled the Opera House on August 16 for *Tell Me About Your Son: Staying Resilient While Covering War*, drawing on his reporting from Gaza, Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan.

The Other: A Film About Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilders

Filmed 2017–2024, this documentary follows Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilders, including a former Hamas member and a man whose parents were murdered on October 7th who continues to advocate for peace. Presented November 19 to more than 100 attendees at Lunt Auditorium in Falmouth in collaboration with the Maine Jewish Film Festival.

Coexistence My Ass!

Winner of the Special Jury Award for Freedom of Expression at Sundance 2025, this documentary follows Israeli comedian and peace activist Noam Shuster Eliassi. Camden Conference partnered with Points North Institute to bring it to an audience of over 300 at the Strand; director Amber Fares joined for a post-screening conversation on January 18.



Photo by Daniel Quintanilla



Sean Flynn and Dir. Amber Fares
Photo by Daniel Quintanilla

Financial Overview

The Camden Conference is people powered and nearly all of what we do is accomplished by a tight-knit community of volunteers. But the cost of “bringing the world to Camden” is significant and we need your support.

Here's what we're doing—and will be doing more of in the coming year:

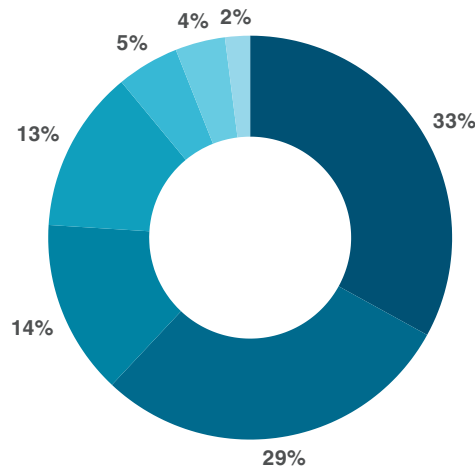
- Sustaining an expanded and improved student program
- Providing free and discounted access for 152 students
—\$34,950 worth this year alone
- Bringing world-class speakers to Camden for our 40th anniversary Conference

Here's what you can do:

- Donate to the Annual Appeal
- Become a member
- Bring a friend to one of our events
- Plan to attend our next conference, Feb 19–21, 2027

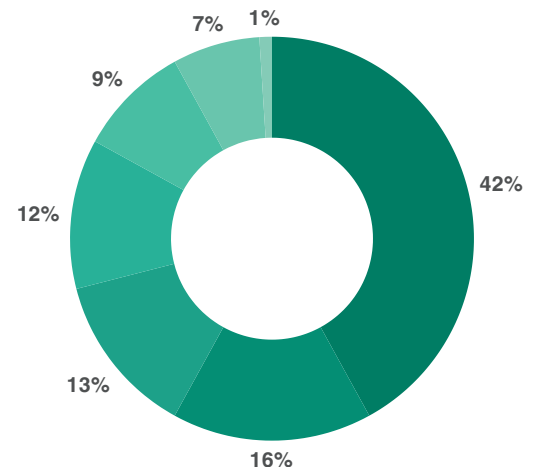
To learn more about supporting the non-profit Camden Conference please visit: camdenconference.org

REVENUE FY2026 (\$594,546)



- 33% Conference Revenue
- 29% Memberships
- 14% Sponsorships & Grants
- 13% Annual Appeal
- 5% Other Income
- 4% Student Education Fund
- 2% Special Events

EXPENSES FY2026 (\$594,546)



- 42% Program Expenses
- 16% Administrative
- 13% Marketing & Communications
- 12% Operating Reserve Contribution
- 9% Student Education Program
- 7% Development
- 1% Community & Special Events

Join.

Membership is your personal investment in the Camden Conference and a key to our financial and operational stability. Members enjoy exclusive benefits and help sustain the programming that brings global perspectives to Maine each year.

BECOME A MEMBER



Volunteer.

The Camden Conference is powered by a dedicated corps of 75+ volunteers who make our year-round programming possible. We welcome new members on our program, education, events, and development committees, as well as help with administrative tasks. We'd love to hear from you.

GET INVOLVED



Donate.

Support the Camden Conference through our Annual Appeal. Your gift helps strengthen our Student Education Fund, rebuild our contingency fund, and sustain the year-round programming that brings global perspectives to Maine. Donors may designate gifts to the Student Education Fund.

GIVE TO THE
ANNUAL APPEAL



With Gratitude to Our FY2026 Supporters

Listed below is combined giving to our Membership, Student Fund, and Annual Appeal for fiscal year 2026. Donations from our February 2026 Conference onward are counted toward fiscal year 2027.

We are incredibly grateful to our community of supporters for an outstanding Fiscal Year 2026.

Every gift, at every level and appeal, drives our mission forward. Space limits us to a snapshot here; our full donor appreciation list is available online—*scan the QR code or visit our website*.



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BEYOND THE AMERICAN CENTURY A NEW WORLD ORDER?

THE 40TH CAMDEN CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 19-21, 2027

For more than 80 years, the world has operated under an American-led international order built on multilateral institutions, open trade, and alliance networks. That era is ending. In recent decades, China has emerged as a global power with the economic reach, military capability, and institutional ambition to match, or even overtake, the United States. Meanwhile, the United States, once the architect and guarantor of the international system it fostered, is now one of its most disruptive forces. Both powers are challenging the old rules, but no new framework has emerged to replace them. Are we entering a new Cold War of ideological and economic blocs? Fragmenting into regional spheres of influence? Returning to 19th-century great power competition? Our 40th anniversary Conference examines this global transition and explores what the future of world order might look like—and whether "order" itself remains the right framework for understanding our century.

CAMDEN CONFERENCE

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P.O. Box 882, Camden, Maine 04843