

# CAFCAW NEWSLETTER

No.1 - February 2023

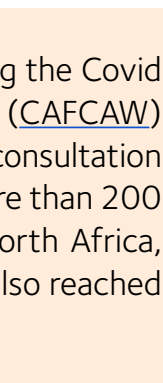
## 2022 in Retrospect



Dar al-Kalima University 24<sup>th</sup> International Conference



**Culture & Digital Transformation Conference**  
Challenges and Opportunities for Southwest Asia and North Africa  
10-11, June 2022 / Cyprus



المؤتمر الدولي الرابع والعشرون لجامعة دار الكلمة

التحديات والفرص لجنوب غرب آسيا وشمال افريقيا

التحديات والفرص لجنوب غرب آسيا وشمال افريقيا

2022 has been an immersive year filled with exciting and productive initiatives following the Covid pandemic lockdowns and restrictions. The Christian Academic Forum for Citizenship (CAFCAW) partnered with several institutions and co-organized an international conference and a consultation in Cyprus and youth workshops in Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. It was able to engage more than 200 participants – speakers, trainers, trainees, and moderators – in Southwestern Asia, North Africa, and diaspora communities from diverse backgrounds and fields of expertise. CAFCAW also reached thousands of visitors on social media and through local and regional press coverage.

## THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



The 24th International Conference on Culture and Digital Transformation was held on June 10 and 11, 2022, at the Elias Beach Hotel in Limassol Cyprus, with 56 in-person participants (including selected participants from the national workshops) and 9 online speakers via Zoom from 17 countries. The conference was organized by Dar al-Kalima University (Bethlehem - Palestine) and CAFCAW.

As digital transformation has impacted the way we create, display, experience, and consume culture, the conference was dedicated to the exploration of current practices and future trends in the use of emerging and interactive digital technologies and platforms in different Southwestern Asian and North African (SWANA) cultural realms such as in cultural heritage, arts, and religion, as well as the effects of digital transformation on tradition, identity, education, cultural diversity management, and sustainable development.

The conference aimed to promote critical and interdisciplinary approaches and dialogue between participants from diverse fields and backgrounds on digital advances. It provided an excellent forum for academics, artists, and practitioners to present and discuss the latest advancement and problems, and future directions in digital transformation and culture in today's SWANA environments challenged by the pandemic "new normal."

## Stay tuned

for the conference proceedings in English and Arabic that will be published by the summer of 2023!

### 1. THE BEIRUT WORKSHOP

The June 2022 Conference was preceded by three youth workshops in May 2022 in Beirut, Amman, and Cairo. The Beirut-Lebanon workshop was held on May 7 and 8, 2022, at the Bossa Nova Hotel in Sin-el-Fil (Lebanon) with 25 in-person and online participants. It was co-organized by Dar al-Kalima University, CAFCAW, and Dar al-Kalima NGO for Arts and Culture/Nabad program (nabad.art) in Lebanon.



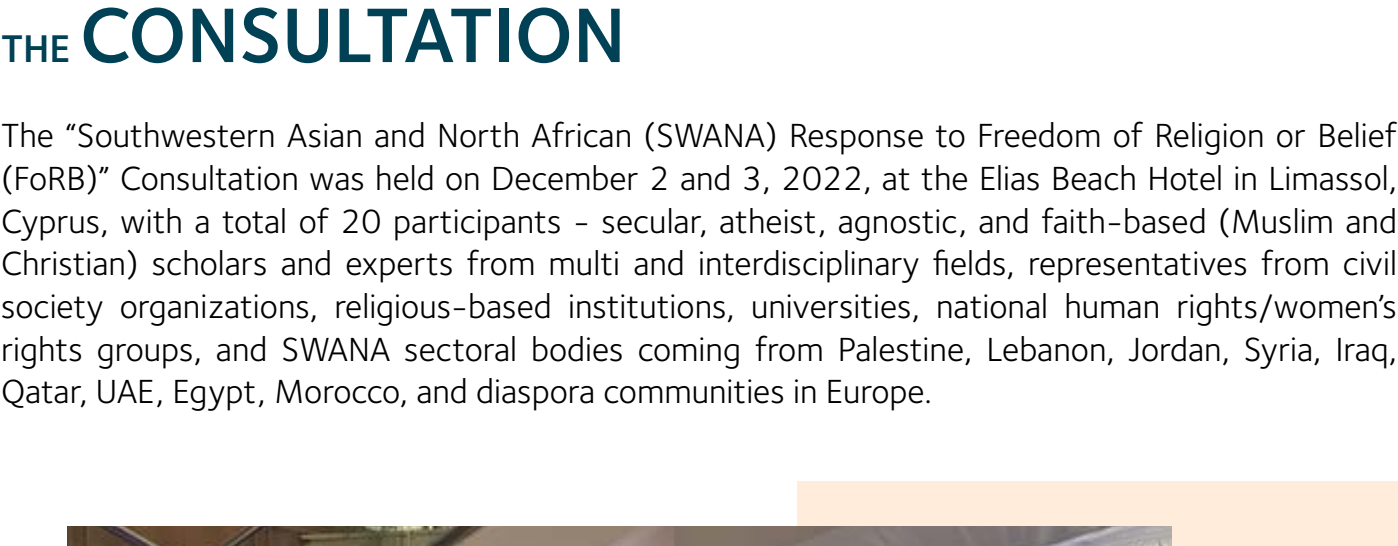
Several issues were addressed by trainers and discussed with academics, university students, artists, activists, creative enterprises, and NGO founders/active members in Beirut: what is the relation between culture and digital transformation? What is the difference between digitization, digitalization, and digital transformation? What are digital arts and their main practices in Lebanon? What are NFTs – and what are their advantages/disadvantages? What is digital calligraphy? What are the current practices and main challenges of digital transformation in the arts and culture domain in Lebanon? How can challenges be faced? What are the solutions? How can cultural heritage be preserved through digital transformation? What are the main tools and techniques to create/manage digital exhibitions and cultural visits? What are the Lebanese citizens' digital rights? How can artists create digital campaigns using different art tools and forms to promote public policies? What are the alternative practices to the digital ones when no infrastructures are available? etc.

The workshop was divided into three main training sessions, which followed an introductory session. Presentations/talks and discussions were done in Lebanese and English. All sessions had a hybrid format, with in-person and online participants and attendees. Participants had the opportunity of experiencing hands-on activities. They worked in groups during the sessions, created storytelling videos using digital technologies, and presented their digital campaigns verbally/in writing and digitally. Dialogue segments were included throughout the workshop, as well as a musical performance and a music-sharing session.



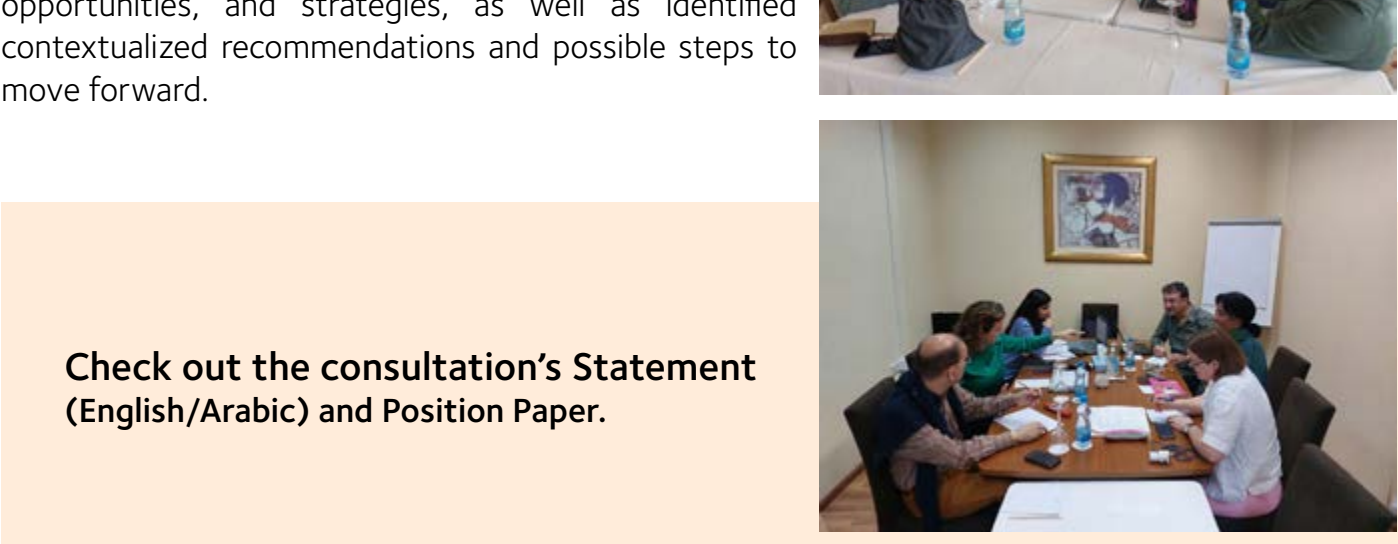
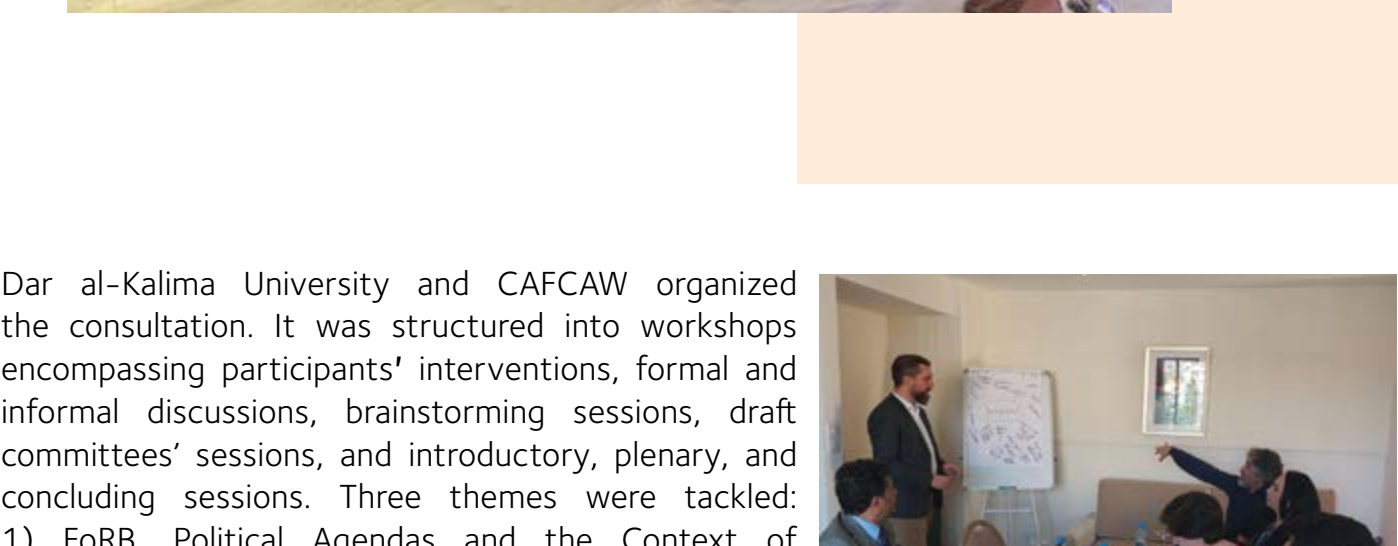
The Amman-Jordan workshop was organized by the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies in Amman, in partnership with CAFCAW and Dar al-Kalima University, on May 16 and 17, 2022. During the workshop, 12 participants of different ages and religions and from different governorates and regions were trained, including refugees from Syria and Sudan.

The focus was on 1) the impact of digital transformation on religious identity; 2) the impact of digital transformation on Muslim-Christian relations, religious discourse, its interpretation, and reception; 3) the impact of digital transformation on culture, tradition, and identity, with an interactive art activity involving music and drawing; 4) the impact of digital transformation on the national religious, cultural and human heritage.



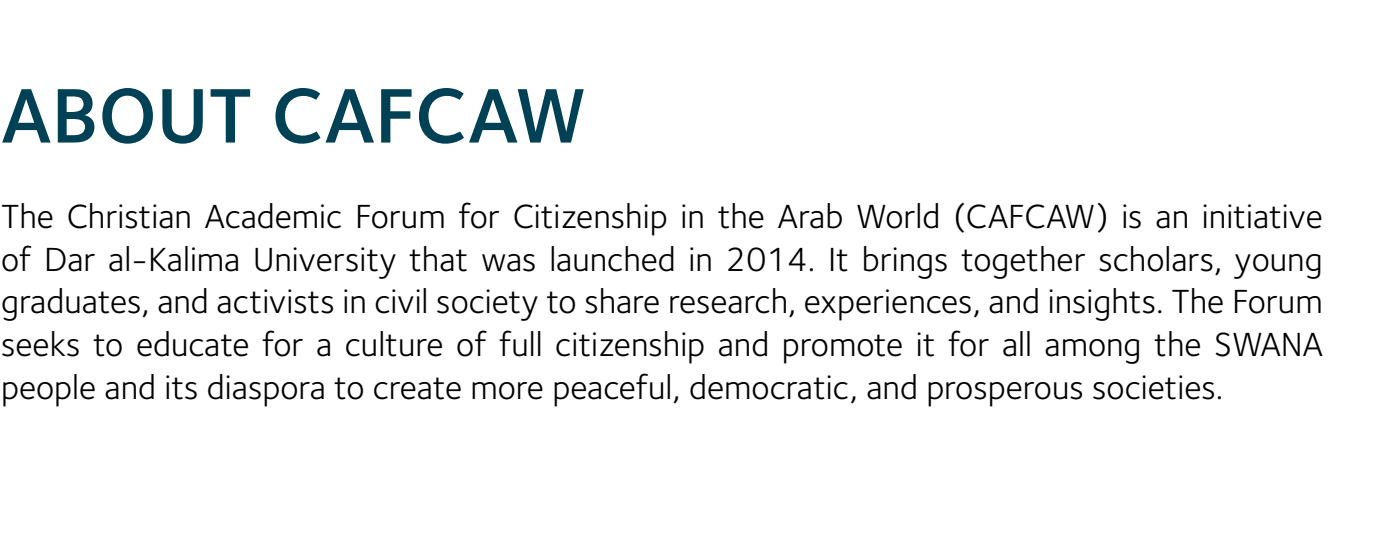
### 3. THE CAIRO WORKSHOP

The Cairo-Egypt workshop was held on May 19 and 20, 2022. It was organized by the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC) in partnership with CAFCAW and Dar al-Kalima University. 20 men and women were selected to participate in the workshop, and they were guided by two highly qualified trainers who addressed two themes: the Impact of Digital Transformation on Tradition and Identity; and Religious Practices in the Digital Age: Opportunities and Challenges. The selection of the 20 participants aimed to ensure diversity in the following criteria: age, gender, geographical locations (from 4 governorates: Tanta, Cairo, Menia, Assuit), educational background (Theology, Medicine, Engineering, Media, Political Science, Fine and Applied Arts, Business, Law, Social Work, and Film-making), experience in digital media, and involvement in a wide range of ministries.



## THE CONSULTATION

The "Southwestern Asian and North African (SWANA) Response to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)" Consultation was held on December 2 and 3, 2022, at the Elias Beach Hotel in Limassol, Cyprus, with a total of 20 participants – secular, atheist, agnostic, and faith-based (Muslim and Christian) scholars and experts from multi and interdisciplinary fields, representatives from civil society organizations, religious-based institutions, universities, national human rights/women's rights groups, and SWANA sectoral bodies coming from Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Qatar, UAE, Egypt, Morocco, and diaspora communities in Europe.



Dar al-Kalima University and CAFCAW organized the consultation. It was structured into workshops encompassing participants' interventions, formal and informal discussions, brainstorming sessions, draft committees' sessions, and introductory, plenary, and concluding sessions. Three themes were tackled: 1) FoRB, Political Agendas and the Context of Southwestern Asia and North Africa; 2) Religious and Non-Religious Individual and Community Rights, and Diversity Management in Southwestern Asia and North Africa; 3) FoRB, Personal Status Laws and Gender Equality in Southwestern Asia and North Africa).

The consultation's main goal was to produce a regional response to FoRB and provide a platform for SWANA stakeholders to share practices and experiences about freedom of religion or belief in SWANA. The participants discussed the challenges in addressing issues related to freedom of religion or belief in SWANA, its implications, opportunities, and strategies, as well as identified contextualized recommendations and possible steps to move forward.

Check out the consultation's Statement (English/Arabic) and Position Paper.

## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023!

Round Table on Religion, Culture, Higher Education and Digital Transformation. Limassol, Cyprus. June 9 & 10, 2023	International Conference on Land, People, and Culture. DAK University, Bethlehem. September - October 2023	National Youth Workshops on Land, People, and Culture. September - October 2023
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## ABOUT CAFCAW

The Christian Academic Forum for Citizenship in the Arab World (CAFCAW) is an initiative of Dar al-Kalima University that was launched in 2014. It brings together scholars, young graduates, and activists in civil society to share research, experiences, and insights. The Forum seeks to educate for a culture of full citizenship and promote it for all among the SWANA people and its diaspora to create more peaceful, democratic, and prosperous societies.

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Visit our Website: [www.cafcaw.org](http://www.cafcaw.org)

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