

Publication:	The National		Beirut Institute		
Date:	June 3, 2015	Section:	The Emirates	Page	10
Language:	Arabic	Circulation:	65,000	Size:	126 cc
Geography:	United Arab Emirates	LINK			

Capital to host think tank summit

ISIL, Iran and job creation will all be on the agenda at autumn conference

Celine Malek

ABU DHABI // The nuclear deal with Iran, trouble-shooting ISIL and regional job creation are some of the topics on the agenda at a major conference scheduled for October.

The Beirut Institute Summit in Abu Dhabi, Reconfiguring the Arab Region and its Global Space, will tap into challenges facing the region.

"This is not to say we will paper over security threats or political economy," said Raghida Dergham, founder of the institute, a regional think tank.

"On the political level, there will be a new relationship between the US and Iran in light of the nuclear deal that is supposed to be taking place in the next couple of months so it will be very important for the Arab region to have a think tank that says 'what does that mean for us and what should be done about it?'"

The presence of ISIL in the region will also be discussed.

"Unfortunately, we have things like [ISIL] in the Arab region so what do we do if this phenomena continues to wreak havoc in the coming years?" she said.

Smart cities in the Arab world, the future of energy, Arab women and innovation will also be tackled. "We also want to think economically - what does this region need, how do we go forward and create jobs?" she said.

Dr Theodote Karasik, a geopolitical analyst in the UAE, said



Beirut Institute founder Raghida Dergham is in town to set up its first conference in Abu Dhabi in October. Lee Hoegland / The National

the summit was an important step in hearing remedies for regional problems. "There are more and more conclave being held in Abu Dhabi," he said. "[These] highlight that the UAE is a platform for discussion and recommendations to the Middle East to remedy regional ills."

Ms Dergham, a Lebanese journalist, said the UAE served as a model for the rest of the region.

"I just came from a conference in Australia and it's fascinating

how they're talking about having driverless cars in three years in New York," she said. "So we need to catch up. Parts of the region, like the UAE, are catching up, but we need to take it further."

She said Abu Dhabi represented a good example of a city being reborn and the thinking that enables it. "The UAE is an inspiring place," she said. "The dreams here can be executed because there is a leadership that encourages that while respecting

the identity of each emirate."

A series of policy recommendations will be taken from 120 government officials, private sector individuals and NGOs.

"There will be four groups of 30 that will have an off-the-record conversation on reconfiguring the Arab region and its global space," she said. "We will then produce ... policy recommendations to be delivered to policymakers throughout the world."

The Minister of Economy, Sul-

tan Al Mansouri; the UAE ambassador to the US, Yousef Al Otaiba; and du's chief executive, Osman Sultan, are among the 120 attendees expected.

"This is a region that has a right to normality and it hasn't had it for quite a long time," Ms Dergham said.

The summit will take place at the St Regis Abu Dhabi on October 10 and 11.

✉ cmalek@thenational.ae