

Session 8

Empowering Humanity: Addressing Social Crises and Inequalities



Moderator

Efnan Han, Presenter, TRT World

Keynote Speaker

Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş, Minister of Family and Social Services, Republic of Türkiye

Speakers

Daniela Carmela Cicchella, Representative a.i. of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Türkiye

Chris Lockyear, Secretary General, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF)

Prof. Fatma Meriç Yılmaz, President, Turkish Red Crescent

Michael Spindelegger, Director General, International Center for Migration Policy Development - ICMPD

Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh, Politician, Former member of the SNP

Key Takeaways

- There are intricate connections between various crises, whether they stem from natural disasters, conflicts, or climate change. These crises often exacerbate each other, leading to complex humanitarian challenges.
- There's a clear recognition that humanitarian efforts cannot be divorced from political contexts. Political decisions heavily influence the effectiveness of humanitarian responses, making it crucial for leaders to prioritise the needs of affected populations.
- There is a necessity for collaboration and collective action in addressing social injustices and crises. No single entity or country can tackle these issues alone, highlighting the need for international partnerships and cooperation.
- The media plays a significant role in shaping public perception and understanding of crises. Highlighting human-interest stories and providing accurate information empowers individuals to form their own analyses and engage with humanitarian issues.
- There's a strong call for bold, principled leadership to navigate the complexities of global crises. Leaders are urged to prioritise the well-being of their populations, advocate for vulnerable groups, and spearhead efforts towards positive change.
- Increasing the representation of women in politics is seen as pivotal for driving positive change. Gender-inclusive leadership can lead to more empathetic and effective decision-making, potentially transforming humanitarian responses for the better.

Summary of the Session

The session titled “Empowering Humanity: Addressing Social Crises and Inequalities” highlighted various humanitarian crises and the responses required to address them. The moderator discussed the importance of collaboration in crisis response, exemplified by the Turkish Red Crescent’s operations worldwide. The dire situation in Gaza, particularly concerning healthcare, was emphasised, shedding light on the challenges faced by doctors amidst limited resources and a collapsing health system.

The session also addressed mass displacement, exemplified by the plight of millions in Gaza and other regions, stressing the need for global partnerships and the media’s role in shaping perceptions of crises and marginalised communities. Climate change-induced disasters were discussed as a catalyst for mass displacement,

necessitating robust recovery efforts.

Further discussions delved into the role of governments, NGOs, and innovative strategies in humanitarian response, as well as the injustice inherent in climate change impacts disproportionately affecting vulnerable nations. Issues of illegal migration and treatment of migrants in Europe and the US were examined, emphasising the importance of collaboration between governments and humanitarian organisations.

Challenges related to politics in humanitarian work were also acknowledged, highlighting the interconnectedness of politics and humanitarian efforts. Overall, the session underscored the urgency of collective action and collaboration to address social crises and inequalities worldwide.

Keynote Speech by Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş

Minister of Family and Social Services, Republic of Türkiye

It's a great pleasure to be with you at TRT World Forum, which has become a brand on its own, contributing to the intellectual agenda and providing a valuable platform for academics, think tanks and international organisations in order to communicate effectively with the world. In this session of TRT World Forum, under the theme of Empowering humanity: addressing the social crisis and inequalities, we are passionately joining the quest for new and immediate solutions to the humanitarian crisis that has now turned into a global ordeal. The world-renowned writer Tolstoy once said 'If you feel pain, you are alive, if you can feel the pain of others, you are human'. Summarising human existence with empathy, he reminds us of our essence in a universal language.

Today, as Tolstoy eloquently described the hearts of all those who are human, resonate deeply with the sufferings in Palestine. Unfortunately, we face a crisis in Gaza and Palestine, where not only human values are tarnished and destroyed, but also human life as a whole. A genocide in the making is what we are witnessing in Gaza. No love, no compassion, no respect for babies, children, women, elderly, mothers. This unfolding genocide perpetrated by the Israeli government against the Palestinians, is a savage attack on human existence, the right to life and future generations. We condemn this attack and in the face of oppression, express loudly once again that we stand by our Palestinian brothers and sisters. We witness actions in support of the Palestinians and protests against Israeli aggression in many countries worldwide, from Ireland to Japan, from Indonesia to the United States. However, reflecting on the bitter consequences of the global world, we observe that the global authorities, which united their powers to develop mechanisms and institutions for security and development, are remaining indifferent to the brutality unfolding. It horrifies us that the global authorities regard the people who lost their lives in Gaza, the majority of whom are women and children, as just a number of some kinds of data. We are witnessing once again that the humanist ideas that have been embraced and enshrined by the West since the 18th century have not eliminated the crisis in the Middle East.



This unfolding genocide perpetrated by the Israeli government against the Palestinians, is a savage attack on human existence, the right to life and future generations. We condemn this attack and in the face of oppression, express loudly once again that we stand by our Palestinian brothers and sisters. We witness actions in support of the Palestinians and protests against Israeli aggression in many countries worldwide, from Ireland to Japan, from Indonesia to the United States.

Thriving Together: Responsibilities, Actions and Solutions

And in today's Gaza, those ideals are ignored, if not forgotten entirely. Moreover, when looking at the international media, it's unsettling to witness prestigious institutions attempting to portray the ongoing genocide in quotes such as a painful but justified or necessary operation.

From time to time, we witness the protests and the resignation of some conscientious media members working for those institutions. It's once again high time for hard-working and fact-seeking media organisations such as TRT World to reflect what's really happening on the field to the attention of the world. As our president, His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has stated, those who remain indifferent to the deaths of thousands of Gazans today will have no credibility for any words they may utter on any subject tomorrow. Türkiye once again stands on the right side of history for Gaza and invites every state that has a share in human history to stand by humanity.

It's time to find new ways in our quest for immediate and sustainable solutions. The global system, under international institutions, claiming to perpetuate peace and justice worldwide, is now evidently failing to alleviate the pain and protect humanity comprehensively. Now it's time to realise that the world is bigger than five. Now is the time to speak about a more just and universal international system that genuinely embraces human values. In this renewal process, taking the initiative locally and regionally, from education to health care, from the economy to the defence industry, and from academia to politics has become crucial. Türkiye's strategy of renewal from the core to the periphery will enhance our global effectiveness, accelerate the healing of wounds, prevent the emergence of new crises, and serve as a good example of and inspiration for the entire world. The power behind our success is the intense love and loyalty we hold for human values, leading us to the Turkish century. This is because, in our culture, it's a good thing to pick up a stone that may trip a random passerby and then put it aside. Sharing your bread is a form of basic kindness. Sharing your troubles is a fine form of kindness, even a smile to a child is a form of kindness. Taking responsibility for the sake of goodness is the simplest and most practical form of humanity. At this point in human history, every single human being should once again adopt the motto of taking action for the sake of humanity as much as they can, and to the best of their ability. Because justice is the quintessential foundation of our dignity, and justice is a universal value.

As power becomes monopolised by one person or a group. Tears will not cease to flow in the common home of humanity or the world. Imagine that from some rooms of this house cries for help are arising and we all hear these cries. Do we stop and stare or do we act? Esteemed guests. Yes, I believe that every person who can feel the pain of others will feel a responsibility. Act with a sense of what I can do. And take a strong stance against those who disregard justice, especially in the face of injustices. Objecting with our words and intervening with our power to end injustice should be the guiding principles of our lives, as stated by our President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Particularly for international entrepreneurs, supranational organisations such as the United Nations, whose purpose is to find solutions to humanitarian and social crises, must take action in line with the equality and justice principles they promise. I therefore welcome Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's move by triggering article 99. However, yesterday we saw the hope for a ceasefire was short lived as the call was vetoed by only one member of the Security Council.

The world is bigger than five. As the Ministry, as a permanent ceasefire begins, we, along with the Palestinian people, will do everything within the framework of the United Nations as well as in coordination with bilateral and regional countries. Dear guest, we remember Rachel Corrie, who declared 'If oppression is ours I'm not one of us' and remained faithful to her words even at the cost of her life. This young woman became an unforgettable example of activism against the violence inflicted on civilians by Israel. With her compassion and sound judgement, she distinguished herself from the oppressor and took a clear stand. Dear guests, on earth the prevalence of justice, compassion and mercy is possible only when the good are as courageous as the oppressors. I particularly want to emphasise that the solutions we seek will not come from outside, but will rise from the conscience of common sense of those who are witnessing and experiencing the humanitarian crisis up close. It's also crucial to remind ourselves of the power of unity in solving humanitarian crises. The ones caused by the earthquake on February 6th in our country are being rapidly healed through the unity of all government units, NGOs and volunteer teams. United, we are healing our wounds. Our continuous efforts to provide humanitarian aid and our establishment of a system that delivers assistance not only during the crisis but also during the aftermath, have facilitated the development of a holistic and coordinated approach. And

this is not only for Türkiye but wherever aid or services are needed. As the Ministry of Family and Social Services, we want to express our readiness to collaborate in all efforts related to the humanitarian crisis.

Every society has a unique culture stemming from its story, geography, natural resources and traditions. The process of globalisation has opened the door for societies to open up to each other. However, it has also exposed them to influences, to alienate them from their unique culture. This has led societies to forget their own essence, making them more susceptible to cultural or physical invasion and occupation. At this point, it's important to know oneself and to read the past and the future through the mirror of our own culture. In our path to the Turkish Century, this is exactly what we are doing. The esteemed First Lady, Her Excellency Emine Erdogan said, in one of her speeches, 'Our past full of heroes or civilisation and culture, who will serve as a role model for humanity is our greatest legacy. Our responsibility is to utilise this increasingly barren climate of the world through this magnificent legacy.

Furthermore, I would like to draw your attention to the correlation between the colonial legacy with the humanitarian crisis and everlasting political and societal unrest. Every society has a unique culture stemming from its story, geography, natural resources and traditions. The process of globalisation has opened the door for societies to open up to each other. However, it has also exposed them to influences, to alienate them from their unique culture. This has led societies to forget their own essence, making them more susceptible to cultural or physical invasion and occupation. At this point, it's important to know oneself and to read the past and the future through the mirror of our own culture. In our path to the Turkish Century, this is exactly what we are doing. The esteemed First Lady, Her Excellency Emine Erdogan said, in one of her speeches, 'Our past full of heroes or civilisation and culture, who will serve as a role model for humanity is our greatest legacy. Our responsibility is to utilise this increasingly barren climate of the world through this magnificent legacy. Human human beings who move through change by nature manifest different crises through laws. We really are the last generation to solve many crises. A drop of mercy, a warm touch is enough for people together from where they have fallen to rise from the ashes when they are burnt. I wish that we could be this drop of mercy, this warm touch for the humanitarian crisis happening in the world right now.



Highlights

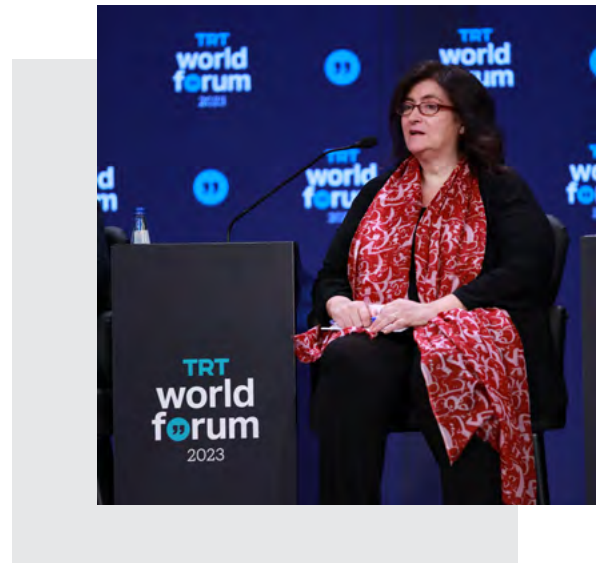
Daniela Carmela Cicchella

Representative a.i. of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Türkiye

After joining the UN Refugee Agency in Türkiye in 1995, she worked in different management positions in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East, with three assignments at Headquarters in Geneva and several field deployments. Her most recent positions have included Assistant Representative in Jordan (2013-2018) where she managed the protection response during the Syrian emergency, and the Division of External Relations at UNHCR Headquarters in charge of Communicating with Communities (2018-2020), before her assignment as UNHCR Deputy Representative in 2020.

Daniela Cicchella, a qualified attorney to the Supreme Court of Justice in Italy, holds an LLM in Sociology of Law/Criminology (Spain/UK) and an MA in Legal Theory/Anthropology (Belgium/France).

- Gaza is attracting the attention of all of us, as has Russia as well. But let's not forget that there are over 14 million people in the world at the moment who are forcibly displaced. And there are so many other locations that we should not forget. For instance, there was a displaced camp that was recently bombed in Myanmar. There is an ongoing situation in Sudan. There are still many crises in Africa. UNHCR currently has 46 emergencies in 23 countries globally. I think we should not overlook that element because it's something that requires attention and focus from all of us. We should focus, of course, on the most critical tragedies that we are witnessing every day. But keeping in mind that unfortunately, many of these crises are not in the highlights, and this is something that we need to address together.
- Giving a face to the statistics is important to focus on in order to find a collective way forward, especially in moments where hope may seem scarce. We need to harness collective strength to address and reverse these trends. This is becoming increasingly evident in our current times.



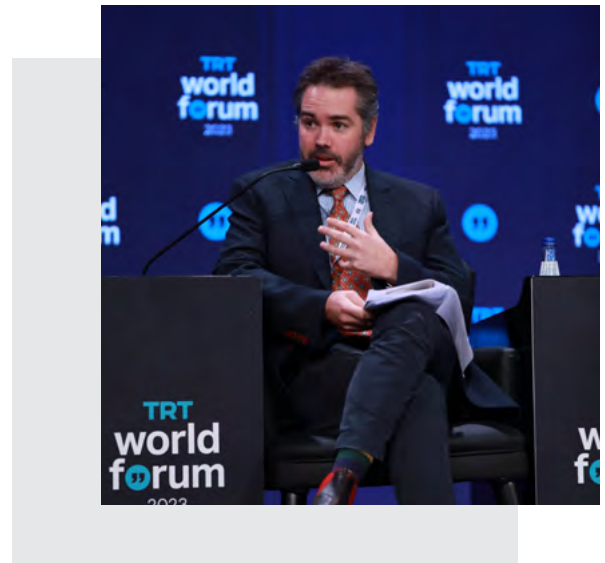
- Maybe we need to reflect on what innovative and innovation mean. Sometimes innovation is solely associated with technology or specific skills of individuals. However, in the context of our discussion today, innovation entails the collective responsibility of challenging the status quo and seeking ways to improve the situation. This requires courage at both individual and organisational levels. Despite the challenges and discouragements, it is crucial to continue striving for improvement.
- Türkiye is still the largest refugee hosting country to date, which is an important fact to remember. There has been significant welcoming of a large number of refugees thus far. However, similar efforts are being made worldwide. For instance, Asian refugees are primarily hosted in Asia, and those forcibly displaced in Africa are mainly supported there. As mentioned earlier, we need to expand our engagement beyond traditional stakeholders and actors. This includes involving financial institutions, the private sector, and other entities that don't typically engage with humanitarian crises.
- Orphan refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants often follow similar routes, yet we must never forget the diverse reasons driving their movement. Refugees are forcibly displaced, while asylum seekers flee against their will. Additionally, exploitation, trafficking, and profiteering often play a role in migration, underscoring the importance of understanding the nuances in addressing these issues.

Chris Lockyear

Secretary General, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF)

Chris first worked for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in 2005 in Darfur, Sudan. He has since worked for the organisation in Somalia and Pakistan. In 2010, he was appointed Operations Manager in Amsterdam, in charge of operations in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda.

Since 2014, Chris has worked and studied outside MSF as a fellow at Yale University, operations director for Action Against Hunger in New York, and a student of philosophy and ethics in the UK.



- The context in which this crisis in Gaza is unfolding reveals pre-existing vulnerabilities in the health system, economy, and job market. As a medical organisation, we understand that hospitals and healthcare are foundational to society, yet they are being systematically destroyed. The indiscriminate bombardment makes it extremely difficult for our teams to operate effectively. While aid may be quantified in terms of trucks and tonnes, true humanitarian assistance is about people helping people. Currently, our efforts feel performative, as the scale of needs far surpasses what we can provide. With around 250 Palestinian staff persevering amidst the chaos, and only a handful of international staff able to support them, the reality of humanitarian aid falls short of the immense challenges we face.
- The statistics indicate that our capacity falls far short of what is needed, even before the current outbreak of conflict. Our ability to safely treat patients and provide basic healthcare, let alone the high-quality surgical and trauma-oriented care urgently required, is hanging by a thread. Working in Gaza is incredibly dangerous, with immense needs and limited resources. This situation not only tests humanitarian assistance globally but also presents a significant challenge to the world.
- Our aim is to further develop partnerships with ministries of health worldwide while also expanding our understanding of the economic and social impacts of climate change. Recognizing the reciprocal relationship between climate change and conflict,

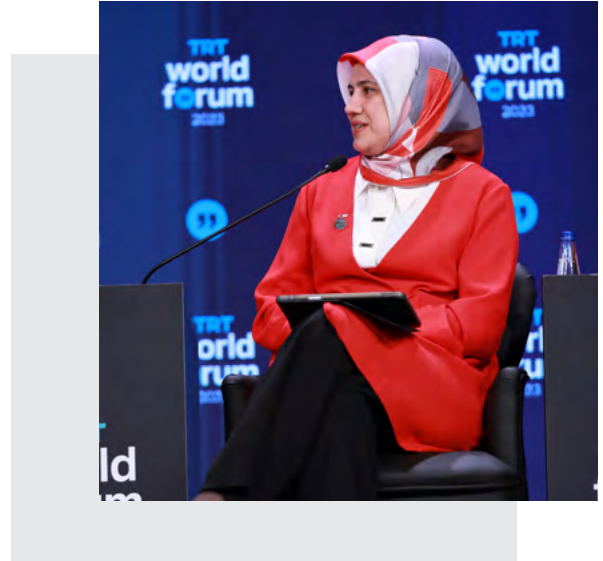
we acknowledge the emergence of a toxic nexus contributing to contemporary patterns. Addressing this interconnectedness is essential for effective intervention.

- Let's not be naive. Humanitarian assistance arises from systemic failures, leadership shortcomings, and political inadequacies. Whether in Gaza, Sudan, South Sudan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, or in addressing the climate crisis and the criminalization of migrants, all these crises necessitate political solutions. Humanitarian efforts serve as temporary fixes to deeper-rooted problems. We operate within political contexts, relying on negotiations for ceasefires or safe passage for aid convoys. Without political cohesion on critical issues like climate change and migration, humanitarian efforts risk becoming futile."

Fatma Meriç Yılmaz

Professor; President, Turkish Red Crescent

Prof. Dr. Fatma Meriç Yılmaz, a medical professional, graduated from Ankara University's Faculty of Medicine and later earned her Associate Professorship in 2008. She held roles such as Chief Assistant and Assistant Clinic Chief at Ankara Education and Research Hospital. Joining Yıldırım Beyazıt University, she became a Professor, serving as Laboratory Coordinator and earning various accolades. Yılmaz contributed to healthcare leadership as the General Secretary of Ankara 1st Regional Public Hospitals Association and Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health. An accomplished academic, she currently teaches at Yıldırım Beyazıt University, specialising in Medical Biochemistry. Additionally, Yılmaz is actively involved in scientific committees, holding positions like TÜBİTAK BİDEP Advisory Board member and IFCC C-NPU commission principal. Beyond academia, she has been a dedicated member of the Turkish Red Crescent, assuming the role of President after her election in July 2023.



- The challenges our world faces include both natural and man-made disasters, whose frequency and severity are increasing. Environmental degradation, climate change, and globalisation contribute to events such as flash floods, epidemics, and droughts. As part of the IFRC Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, the Turkish Crescent's response benefits from a unique structure with partners worldwide. Each national society within this movement offers countrywide coverage, enabling a localised and coordinated response.
- "The worldwide crisis comprises both natural and man-made disasters, amplifying the challenges we face. In this complex environment, no entity can respond to crises alone. Collective efforts are more crucial than ever, necessitating collaboration and solidarity. Together, hand in hand, we must work to address these challenges effectively.
- As a humanitarian organisation, our commitment is unwavering: we must be there when needed, leaving no one behind. Whether they are citizens or refugees fleeing from Syria or elsewhere, in our humanitarian eyes, there is no distinction. Access to basic needs, especially for women and children, is paramount. In emergency responses, regardless of the nature—be

it armed conflict, natural disasters, migration, or other crises—the most vulnerable groups are consistently women and children. They are the backbone of our response efforts, as evidenced by their pivotal role in facilitating fast recovery and overall well-being.



Michael Spindelegger

Director General, International Center for Migration Policy Development - ICMPD

Michael Spindelegger has extensive experience in international relations through his work in the Federal Government of the Republic of Austria. From 2008 to 2013 he served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and from 2013 to 2014 as Minister of Finance. Additionally, he was the vice chancellor and leader of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) from 2011 to 2014. In January 2016 he was appointed as the Director General of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), and reappointed by the ICMPD Steering Group in December 2019 for another term of five years.



- Despite numerous initiatives over the years, finding effective solutions to address inequalities remains a formidable challenge. However, there are promising ideas emerging to tackle these issues and provide opportunities, particularly for young people in different countries. One such idea involves greater involvement of the private sector in migration. By creating sustainable workplaces in countries of origin, we can offer viable alternatives to irregular migration. Projects in Africa have demonstrated the tangible impact of this approach on the ground.
- Another promising idea is to establish more legal pathways for migration. Many migrants resort to irregular means, facing numerous challenges upon arrival in destination countries. Legal pathways provide alternatives and create opportunities for young people from countries of origin, leveraging their skills and contributing to job creation.
- What is particularly promising to me, having observed this for many years, is that many countries are increasingly open to forming partnerships along migration routes. This shift towards partnership signifies a common understanding of shared challenges and the willingness to view issues from the perspective of both one's own country and that of their partners. This collaborative approach holds great promise for the years ahead.
- In a country with 170 million people, living just one metre above sea level in Bangladesh, there is genuine fear for the future. The immediate impact of climate change on migration manifests as displacement within the country and to neighbouring regions. Recognizing this, we must prioritise the establishment of legal pathways for those affected, coupled with training initiatives in partnership with the private sector within their countries of origin. This proactive approach aims to provide hope and opportunity to citizens before mass displacement becomes inevitable.
- When migrant numbers surge, as witnessed in past instances, it erodes citizens' trust in the state's ability to manage the situation. This erosion of trust often leads to xenophobic sentiments, as seen in Europe in 2015/16. To mitigate this, it's essential to proactively educate and prepare citizens about the measures the state can take. Positive integration examples and successful projects serve as powerful communication tools in migration policy. By showcasing successful integration efforts and their benefits, states can garner greater support from their citizens.

Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh

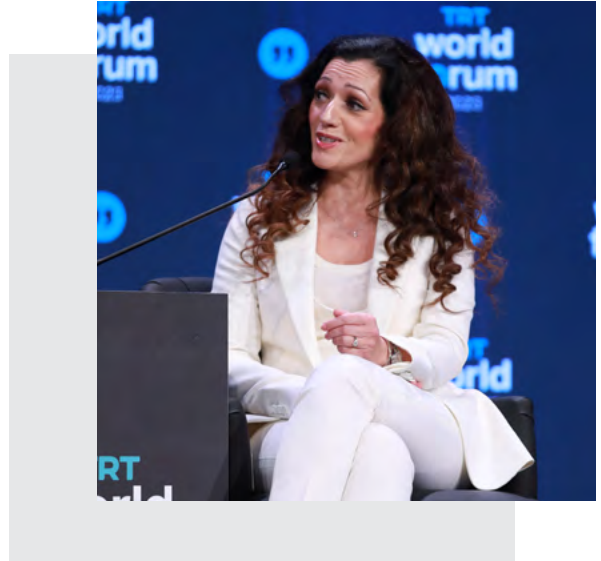
Politician, Former member of the SNP

Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh is a Scottish politician, and former member of the SNP. When elected to the House of Commons in 2015, she became the first woman of colour in Scottish history, to be elected from Scotland to any parliament – Westminster, Scottish or European.

She was awarded an OBE by the late Queen Elizabeth for services to business and the Asian community. She has also won Scottish Asian Businesswoman of the Year in Scotland and Asian Woman Professional of the Year at the prestigious Asian Women of Achievement Awards in London. She also served as a board member of the Yes Scotland campaign in the independence referendum of 2014 and is an alumna of the US State Department International Visitors Leadership Programme.

Currently, Ms Ahmed-Sheikh is working in television as a producer and presenter and writes a weekly political column for The National.

- In situations where 13 countries may vote for a ceasefire to save lives, but one country can veto it, we must look to the future and ensure that we communicate the story effectively. The media's greatest role lies in highlighting the human interest aspect of events, such as the story you shared of a journalist's loss. These personal narratives resonate with people and facilitate a shift from political discourse to human connection. As individuals increasingly seek information independently, it's crucial to empower them with accurate information to form their own analyses.
- I'm quite taken aback by the UK government's misinterpretation of the situation. However, as a proud Scot, I'm heartened by the Scottish Parliament's vote for a ceasefire. When Scotland achieves independence, as I firmly believe it will, we will be an eager and conscientious participant in shaping foreign policy.
- People are displaced due to both climate emergencies and conflicts. However, there's no hierarchy of refugees. Unfortunately, there's a tendency to perceive some refugees as more deserving than others. As we contemplate future policies, particularly with the upcoming United States election, immigration



becomes an inevitable consequence of displacement. Where will these displaced individuals go? This is a matter of great concern for me.

- There's a significant responsibility on countries that are the primary contributors to climate injustice, which affects countless people worldwide. However, the UK is currently grappling with its immigration policy and experiencing internal strife. We must revisit the phraseology used by your president: "The world is greater than five." This underscores the need for collective efforts, partnerships, and unwavering determination to ensure that humanity triumphs. Humanity knows no boundaries of nationality, creed, religion, or colour. Every life is precious, and it's imperative that we work together to save each and everyone.
- Politics and humanitarian efforts are intertwined and inseparable. Political leadership plays a crucial role. Increasing women's representation in politics can have a profoundly positive impact. In conclusion, the world desperately needs bold, courageous, strong, principled leadership. If such leadership existed, we wouldn't find ourselves in our current predicament. Therefore, I urge all leaders worldwide to step up, take a stand, and truly represent their people. Speak for them, not at them or to them.