

# DR. SOUSAN ABADIAN, PH.D.

1200 N Nash St. #253 Arlington, VA 22209 – (617) 901-5358 – [sousan.abadian@gmail.com](mailto:sousan.abadian@gmail.com)

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## EXECUTIVE PROFILE

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Scholar, educator, consultant, speaker, and coach, with over twenty years of experience in public policy, leadership development, international development, resilient responses to collective trauma and atrocities, gender issues, indigenous peoples, human rights policy, and conflict mitigation and transformation. Effective and dynamic communicator with strong facilitation and relationship building skills. Capacity to act independently, lead projects, as well as work collaboratively as a team player. Geographic and on-the ground expertise in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, India, Bangladesh, Israel, Jordan, Canadian First Nations communities, Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Iran, and Western Europe. U.S. Citizenship and Secret Clearance.

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## SELECT EDUCATION

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**HARVARD UNIVERSITY, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences** – Cambridge, MA  
*Doctor of Philosophy, Political Economy and Government, June 1999*

**HARVARD UNIVERSITY, John F. Kennedy School of Government** – Cambridge, MA  
*Master of Public Administration, June 1988*

**HARVARD UNIVERSITY, Graduate School of Arts & Sciences** – Cambridge, MA  
*Master of Arts, The Anthropology of Social Change and Development, June 1987*

**SWARTHMORE COLLEGE** – Swarthmore, PA  
*Bachelor of Arts, Sociology & Anthropology, with minor in Economics, 1984*

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## EXPERIENCE

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**U.S. Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom, DRL** – Washington, DC  
*Franklin Fellow and Foreign Policy Advisor, July 2017 – Present*

- Awarded **American Academy of Religion-LUCE Fellowship** to serve as a Franklin Fellow (2017-2018).
- Oversee portfolio that includes preventing and countering violent extremism, religious freedom and gender, religious minorities in MENA, response to atrocities, cultural heritage protection, Iran.
- Served on planning and execution team for the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom. Joined Ambassador-at-Large Brownback in individual closed-door discussions with interfaith leaders from Jordan and India on protecting religious minorities in their countries and region. Provided subject matter expertise and offered technical guidance for break-out session on “*Atrocities and Restoration of Religious Minorities Post-Conflict.*”
- Created and advanced religious freedom and trauma-related written and social media products:
  - Authored DipNote “[\*The Eternal Flame: The Universality of Freedom of Religion or Belief\*](#)” in advance of the International Religious Freedom Ministerial (shared over 800 times).
  - Featured as DRL public diplomacy representative for four live events and a written interview ([\*Collective Trauma and Challenges to Diplomacy\*](#)), with one video having up to 6,700 views. Favorable responses include: “I can’t thank you enough for an informative, inspiring presentation... you gave me hope for our government and a reminder to continue to work on myself, to meet anger with kindness and fear with love.” (President, Schiller Center).
- Authored 85-pg. monograph on gender and religious freedom, using female genital mutilation/cutting as a case example.

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### EXPERIENCE - CONTINUED

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- Spoke on panel, “[Rehabilitating and Reintegrating Violent Extremists](#),” USIP, Nov. 27, 2018.
- Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) Embassy Consultations and Fact-finding Trips:
  - Traveled to Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kosovo, consulted to and interviewed embassy, government officials, religious leaders (including members of Interreligious Council), civil society actors, and multilateral organizations (OECD, UNESCO) on the status of P/CVE, religious freedom, atrocity prevention, democracy and governance, reconciliation and trauma recovery post-conflict, and the situation of women. Co-led intra-agency debriefs (CT/CVE, CSO, Europe Desk, DRL) distilling trip findings, and authored memorandum for AAL Brownback proposing next steps in U.S.’s support for Serbian-Bosniak reconciliation efforts.
  - Traveled to UAE (Dubai and Abu Dhabi), consulted with embassy on CVE and religious freedom, as well as with researchers and facilitators at HEDAYAH, Center for Excellence in Countering Violent Extremism on programming recommendations.
- Advise AAL Brownback on key outcomes and levers of influence in Iran, informing and shaping the Office’s overall strategy.
- Engaged with diverse stakeholders on, including academics, human rights advocates, representatives of Iranian religious minorities (Bahai, Zoroastrian, and Christian) and Shi’a leaders.
- Selected for U.S. delegation to U.N.’s “Plan of Action Meeting for Religious Leaders” in Vienna. Led U.S. engagement with the U.N. Office on document, “*Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes.*”
- Facilitated dialogue among Muslim, Sufi, Christian evangelical, Hindu, Zoroastrian, and Jewish clerics and civil society actors, as well as academics working to protect religious minorities and prevent atrocities. As part of engagement, participated in weekly IRF roundtable discussions and international conferences.
- Presented paper at Institute on Violence, Abuse, and Trauma Conference, “*Trauma Narratives and Violent Extremism: Reframing Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilizations.’*”
- Foreign Service Institute Trainings: *Preventing Genocide and Mass Atrocities through Multilateral Diplomacy*; *Religion and Foreign Policy.*”
- Served as action officer for cultural heritage protection and restoration. Engaged with Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Smithsonian on training programs for religious minorities in the Middle East.

### Thought leader, Educator, & Practitioner: Leadership, Collective Trauma & Narrative

**Transformation**, domestic and international locations (please refer to sample in Addendum, pgs. 6-7), 2000 – 2017

- Presented keynote addresses, designed and delivered workshops, coached, and mentored university students, civil society actors, government officials, faith-based actors, and business people. Clients include universities such as Harvard and U. of Monterrey Leadership Program (Mexico), Government of Nunavut, the German-Israeli Young Leaders Exchange, and the Petroleum Institute in Abu Dhabi (please refer to Addendum for abbreviated list).
- **Respected thought leader and subject matter expert on responses to historic atrocities and collective trauma**, for ex., featured and profiled in 2008 Harvard Magazine article, “[Trails of Tears, and Hope: ‘Collective trauma’ takes a ferocious toll on human societies—yet there are pathways to healing.](#)” Also, authored Harvard doctoral thesis, “*From Wasteland to Homeland: Trauma and the Renewal of Indigenous Peoples and their Communities.*” In the 2008 Harvard Magazine article, Nobel Laureate in economics Amartya Sen is quoted as saying: “*Sousan has a huge combination of imagination, intelligence, and concern for empirical data. [Her research is] pioneering, highly original work.*”
- Served as one of the principal advisor’s to Padre Leonel Narvaez on the formation of ESPERE, Schools of Forgiveness & Reconciliation. Advised on the creation of grassroots social peace process and trauma healing curriculum to support the political peace process. ESPERE began in Colombia and has spread to over 10 countries (Colombia, 2000-2007).

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### EXPERIENCE - CONTINUED

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- Provided leadership training, coaching, and mentoring for Indigenous Chiefs and Council in various Canadian First Nations reserves, (for ex., Anishinaabe, Swamy Cree, Blood, Shuswap, Inuit, Lac Brochet) to address suicide epidemics, substance abuse, rampant violence, social disintegration, and poverty (2000-2009).
- Conducted research/interviews throughout Canada, developed recommendations for Canadian Government for “Aboriginal Leadership Labs” designed to foster reconciliation between First Nations and settler populations (Generon Consulting, Beverly, MA, 2005–2006).
- Facilitated constructive dialogue between those with long-standing grievances, for example, Israelis and Palestinians, Pakistanis and Indians, Japanese and Chinese. Themes covered include cultivating breakthrough leadership capacity for social change, neutralizing victim-perpetrator narratives, disrupting cycles of violence, laying the past to rest (Harvard University).
- Facilitated conversations in Harvard Working Group on “*Frontiers of Conflict Resolution*” with senior conflict resolution practitioners working in hotspot regions, i.e. Israel, Palestine, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Sudan (Weatherhead Center, Harvard University, 1999-2001).
- **Leadership thought leader and subject matter expert:** Contributed to the articulation of key principles in the [Adaptive Leadership Framework](#) including providing significant rewriting and seminal support to Dr. Ronald Heifetz (co-founder of Harvard Center for Public Leadership) on two books *Leadership without Easy Answers* and *Leadership on the Line* (co-authored with Marty Linsky, 1986-2006).
- *Served as part of teaching team for foundational fall leadership courses* taught at Harvard Kennedy School by Dr. Ron Heifetz (creator of Adaptive Leadership framework), 1993-1996:
  - met for *weekly supervision* with Dr. Heifetz and team to discuss our challenges in adult education;
  - intervened during classes to make observations and course-correct group dynamics as part of “back of the room” assistance to Dr. Heifetz (front-of-the-room);
  - provided strategic analysis and facilitated weekly conversations with subgroups of midcareer students meeting to analyze their cases of organizational leadership failures and what they could have done differently; provided weekly written feedback for cases;
  - Received distinguished teaching assistant award.
- Provided “back of the room” assistance and course design advise to Dr. Heifetz on “*The role of Authority in Leadership*,” Harvard University winter course, 2003-2006.
- Utilized *experiential learning* methodology in teaching, specifically “using the class as a case-in-point,” requiring the ability to distinguish and analyze group dynamics happening in the moment within the session and skillfully articulate these insights to illustrate key strategic concepts.
- *Facilitated difficult conversations and discoveries, as well as taught substantive material* (making the distinction between leadership and authority, and between adaptive and technical work; strategies to orchestrate change processes in organizations; how to properly assess group dynamics; developing an organization’s capacities and pacing “the work” so as not to overwhelm people in the organization; understanding the pressures various factions were under and what values they represented; using oneself as a barometer of group tensions; recognizing and circumventing typical “work avoidance” mechanisms organizations use to avoid necessary but difficult changes).
- *Provided strategic analysis of organizational dynamics:* taught individuals to analysis their organizations’ needs and challenges, identify the various factions, and how to skillfully intervene within the system and with whom to ally in order to create substantive changes in behavior, values, and attitudes over time, 1999-2008.
- Taught “blended” semester course “*Leadership in Development Practice*” for mid-career professional students enrolled in a master’s degree program in Community Development at the California School of Professional Psychology. Provided intensive four-day in-house instruction, followed by four months of distance teaching/learning (via teleconferencing and the internet). Fresno Campus, CA., February 2000-June 2000.
- Consulted to the Ecuadorian presidential candidate, former Ambassador to the U.S., and Ecuadorian Minister of Trade and Agriculture, Ivonne Baki (Ecuador, July-September 2002).
- Co-led crisis leadership retreat with Dr. Ronald Heifetz for Jamil Mahuad, then President of Ecuador. Sessions

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examined different factions and sources of opposition in the political domain and explored President Mahuad negotiation strategies during the period of economic crisis. (Quito, Ecuador, December 1999 - January 2000).

- *Conducted individual needs-assessment and provide 12-week structured mentoring program and individual leadership coaching sessions* tailored to the needs of individual clients, <https://www.sousanabadian.com> (2014-2017).

### **MIT, Dalai Lama Center for Ethics & Transformative Values – Cambridge, MA**

*Fellow, Sept 2009 – Dec. 2011*

- Awarded grant by **Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center** for Fellowship at MIT (2009-2010).
- Developed the **ARIA Framework** designed to support individuals to exercise leadership, free from victim-perpetrator narratives, enhance resilience, and optimize their creative capabilities.

### **Cambridge Leadership Associates (CLA) – domestic and international**

*Associate, June 2003 – Sept 2007*

- Delivered keynotes on adaptive leadership and skills, conducted needs assessment and interviews with clients, designed and delivered 1½-5 days leadership workshops alone or with a colleague as part of Cambridge Leadership Associate staff, for government officials, NGOs, religious leaders, educators, and heads of businesses. Clients included CARE, U. of Hawaii's Asia Pacific Leadership Program, National League of Cities Annual Leadership Summit, McArthur Foundation in India, and U. of Denver's Rocky Mountain Institute (please refer to Addendum for abbreviated list).

### **Harvard University, Center for Public Leadership – Cambridge, MA**

*Post-doctoral Research Fellow, 2002-2005*

- Participated in Leadership Research Group, as part of a core group of five individuals, who met twice monthly for an intensive collaborative enterprise to develop theory and empirical research methods, discuss adult education challenges, critique and support the writing of books and articles, and strengthen the community of scholars and practitioners working in this research area. Cambridge, MA, September 2003 – June 2005.
- Co-led 3-day event with two Harvard faculty members on “The Role Religious Leadership in Preventing Atrocities,” for Muslim, Christian, and Jewish heads of seminaries from the U.S., Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Tajikistan, Harvard Kennedy School, “Summit for Interfaith Respect” (Cambridge, MA, 2004).
- Personally invited to participate in Harvard University's Interfaculty Working Group on "Resilient Responses to Social Crisis" (Cambridge, MA, 2002–2004), for distinguished scholars across disciplines in monthly discussions exploring human and social resilience, and implications for policy; presented paper, “What Makes a Community Healthy and What's the Role of Leadership?”
- Designed a unique framework evaluating different kinds of collective traumas to help explain why some communities are more likely to get stuck in cycles of poverty, violence, and poor governance following traumatic experiences, while others more easily recover. Framework helps explain why we need to respond differently to different kinds of collective traumas. Recently began exploring application to the Afghani context.
- Authored “Nation-building in a Traumatized World” – 100 pg. monograph distributed to select Harvard and Tufts faculty and meant to inform our interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (April 2003).

### **Additional Adult Education Training (Leadership and Resilience):**

- Certified Life Mastery Coach/Mentor, June 2013-June 2014.
- Completed two advanced trainings on facilitating group discussions on difficult topics, *Center for Mind Body Medicine*, Washington, D.C., October 2008-February 2009.
- Trained with Dr. Robert Kegan as part of Cambridge Leadership Associates' staff to utilize and apply Dr. Kegan's adult education model to leadership education, 2003-2007. Dr. Kegan is William and Miriam Meehan Research Professor in Adult Learning and Professional Development, at Harvard University Education School.

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- Took an experiential, intensive weeklong *Adult Educator's Module, "How to Teach Leadership,"* taught by Ron Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Harvard Education School faculty, Harvard Kennedy School, winter 2003. Learned adult education principles and challenges; taught leadership modules and received critique from class and professors to sharpen skills.
  - Trained in *enhancing strengths and resilience in both organizations and individuals* (taught by Martin Seligman, The Positive Psychology Center, U. of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA.), fall and winter 2002.
  - Participated in several trainings on the *U-Process Facilitation Methods*, taught by Otto Scharmer (MIT), facilitation practices designed to create organizational innovation, 2002-2006.
  - Participated in experiential programs offered by *Tavistock Institute of Human Relations*, 1987.
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### SELECT PUBLICATIONS

- **"Adaptive Consent in Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Call for Cultural Renewal"** (2019).
- **"Mastering Memories,"** in *The Political Culture of Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, Father Leonel Narvaez, editor, published in Latin America and the U.S. (2009, 2010).
- **"Taming the Beast: Trauma in Jewish Religious and Political Life"** (co-authored with Tamar Miller, *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, Volume 83, Number 2/3, 2007).
- **"Cultural Healing: When Cultural Renewal is Reparative and when it is Toxic"** (*Journal of Indigenous Wellbeing*, 2006).
- **"Nation-building in a Traumatized World"** (Harvard interfaculty distribution, April 2003).
- ***From Wasteland to Homeland: Trauma and the Renewal of Indigenous Peoples and their Communities***, doctoral dissertation, supervised by Nobel Laureate in economics Amartya Sen.
- **"Women's Autonomy and Its Impact on Fertility,"** *World Development* (lead article, December 1996).
- ***Effectiveness of Microfinance in Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable Women in Bangladesh: BRAC and Grameen Bank*** (*Harvard MPA Capstone Project*, June 1988).
- ***The Status of Women in Bangladesh: Implications for Fertility and Population Policies*** (Harvard University Master's Thesis in Anthropology, June 1986)

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## ADDENDUM (Select workshops and keynotes)

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### *Independent Consulting (sample)*

#### **Cyrus Institute of Knowledge (Bentley University), Dubai, UAE, 2014.**

- *The Role of Inner Sovereignty in Breakthrough Leadership* - conference keynote at “West-Meets-East: Exploring Sustainable Development, Innovation, and Opportunities.”

#### **Native American Summer Program, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, 2005, 2006, 2010.**

- Workshops: *We are the Ones We've Been Waiting For: Developing Youth Leadership Capacity to Transform Reservations*-for high school students from 3 reservations.

#### **Center for Human Rights and Popular Education, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2009.**

- Workshop: *Alternative Justice: Healing Underlying Trauma to Circumvent Violence.*

#### **ESPERE, Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation (Fundacion Para La Reconciliacion), Brazil, 2009, Columbia, 2007.**

- Offered talks and workshops on *Mastering Memories and Making Peace with the Past.*

#### **Native Counseling Services of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, 2008.**

- Workshop: *Resiliency and Healing Toxic Posttraumatic Narratives.*

#### **University of Monterrey (Mexico) Leadership Program, Monterrey, Mexico, 2007.**

- Keynote and discussion: *How Do We Create Cultures of Peace?*

#### **Harvard Kennedy School, Cambridge, MA, 2004, 2006.**

- Workshop: *Exercising Leadership for Asia: Transforming Toxic Trauma Narratives.*
- Workshop: *Exercising Leadership in the Middle East: Negotiating Peace While Navigating Trauma.*

#### **German-Israeli Young Leaders Exchange (Bertelsmann Stiftung Foundation), Berlin, 2006.**

- Keynote speech and workshop: *Transforming Narratives: Going Beyond Victim and Perpetrator* - for 90 German and Israeli leaders.

#### **International Indigenous Council for Healing Our Spirit Worldwide, Edmonton, Canada, 2006.**

- Presentation: *When is Cultural Renewal Reparative & when is it Toxic?*

#### **Squamish Nation, Vancouver, BC, Canada, 2005.**

- Workshops: *Healing Ourselves – Healing the Human Family.*

#### **Harvard Medical School, “International Peace through Health Program,” Boston, MA, 2004.**

- Workshop: *Daring to Transform Jewish and Palestinian Trauma Narratives.*

#### **Government of Nunavut, Conference on Social Indicators of Well-Being, Iqaluit, Nunavut, 2004.**

- Keynote and Presenter: *Inuit Renewal.*

#### **Inuit Executive Leadership Program, Harvard Kennedy School, Cambridge, MA, 2002.**

- Keynote: *Leaders in Bridging Worlds*-for 125 Inuit leaders and Harvard faculty.

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### ADDENDUM (Select workshops and keynotes) – CONTINUED

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#### **Anishinaabe Nation, Grand Council Treaty #3, Lake Falcon, Manitoba, Canada, 2001.**

- Training: *Leadership, Collective Renewal, and Nation-building*-for 28 Ojibway tribal chiefs, Grand Chief Leon Jourdain, and select council members.

#### **Four Worlds International, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, 2001.**

- Workshops: *Healing the Hurt and the Shame of Residential Schools*-for counselors, health workers, and aboriginal community members.

#### **Swampy Cree Tribal Council, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada, 2000.**

- Training: *Leadership, Collective Renewal, and Nation-building*-for 30 Swampy Cree tribal chiefs and the Council Representatives.

#### Business Consulting (sample)

#### **Navigant Consulting, Grand Del Mar, San Diego, CA, 2015.**

- *Capturing Your Leadership Legacy* - keynote address for audience of 125 women business leaders at 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Women's Business Leadership Forum.

#### **Petroleum Institute, Abu Dhabi, UAE, 2014.**

- *Inner Engineering and Engineering Outcomes* - three experiential workshops to engineering faculty, select graduate and undergraduate leaders.

#### Cambridge Leadership Associates (sample)

#### **U. of Hawaii's Asia Pacific Leadership Program, East-West Center, Oahu, Hawaii, August 14, 2007.**

- Presented "*Adaptive Leadership*," setting the context for a nine-month leadership program for the 32 fellows from 22 Asian countries.

#### **CARE, Seattle, WA, November 8-11, 2005.**

- Designed and co-delivered 3-day workshop "*Leading with Impact*" for CARE's international field and headquarter staff. Analyzed case studies, engaged in problem-solving exercises, and facilitated discussions to support CARE in moving from an emergency response to a poverty alleviation mission.

#### **National League of Cities: 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Leadership Summit, Boston, MA, 2005.**

- *Leadership on the Line: Meeting the Challenges of Leading Local Government* - workshop for mayors and city council members.

#### **Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, India, 2003.**

- Designed and co-delivered 5-day workshop "*Exercising Leadership and Staying Alive*" for MacArthur Foundation.

#### **University of Denver's Rocky Mountain Institute, Colorado, February 3-4, 2004.**

- Designed and delivered 2-day workshop "*Exercising Leadership and Staying Alive*," for a group of 120 state and local government officials.