



U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing

Religious Minorities' Fight to Remain in Iraq

Panel I

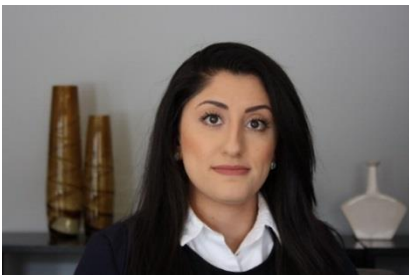


Hallam Ferguson is USAID's Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for the Middle East, with a portfolio that includes Iraq, Syria and West Bank/Gaza. Ferguson also oversees the Middle East Bureau's efforts to help religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria recover from the ISIS genocide, and to promote religious freedom throughout the region.

Ferguson joined USAID in 2017 after 13 years with the International Republican Institute (IRI), where he began his development career in Afghanistan in 2004. During his tenure at IRI, Ferguson helped Afghanistan prepare for the country's first presidential elections and subsequent parliamentary elections, served as Director of Operations for the Iraq program based in Erbil, and in 2010 assumed overall management of the Iraq program, at that time the largest in the Institute. In 2011 Ferguson became IRI's Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, with responsibility for programs from Morocco to Pakistan, and accounting for one quarter of IRI's total grant dollars.

Prior to joining IRI, Mr. Ferguson holds a Master's degree in international security at Georgetown University.

Panel II



Pari Ibrahim is the Founder and Executive Director of the Free Yezidi Foundation (FYF). She left Iraq with her family when she was three years old, fleeing attacks by the Saddam Hussein regime. She had lived outside the city of Duhok in the town of Khanke. She and her family were brought to the Netherlands as political refugees. Ms. Ibrahim is passionate about psychological treatment for sexual abuse survivors, gender equality and women's empowerment in the Yezidi community, awareness of the plight of

the Yezidis, resettlement of the most severe cases among the Yezidi survivors, and the pursuit of justice and accountability.

After the ISIS attacks on Sinjar and the Yezidi population in August 2014, Ms. Ibrahim founded the Free Yezidi Foundation to help Yezidi civilians in need and raise awareness of the situation. She has spearheaded FYF

efforts to establish women's and children's centers, leads the FYF justice project, and conducts general advocacy to promote greater humanitarian and human rights support to Yezidi civilians. Ms. Ibrahim studied law at the University of Amsterdam.



Reine Hanna is the Co-Founder and Director of the Assyrian Policy Institute, a nonprofit which aims to support Assyrians as they struggle to maintain their rights in their ancestral homeland. She has visited conflict areas in Middle East to conduct fact-finding missions and has authored several authoritative human rights reports on issues affecting Assyrians. As the organization's senior advocate, she is passionate about minority rights and has worked for years to challenge injustice and support efforts to build fairer and more inclusive societies.



Aaron Ashoff is Samaritan's Purse Deputy Director of International Projects. He previously served as Regional Director for Europe and the Middle East before his recent promotion to the Senior Management Team. Aaron was an active duty officer in the United States Army and is a Bronze Star Medal recipient awarded in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He has worked for Samaritan's Purse since 2008 where he has served in field assignments providing life-saving assistance to Somali refugees in the Somali State of Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivorian refugees in Liberia, and Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis and other migrants into Europe during the European refugee crisis. Mr. Ashoff served at Samaritan's Purse International Headquarters as Ebola Task Force Response Manager during the Ebola Crisis in West Africa in 2014 and as Samaritan's Purse Mosul Response Manager in 2017 which included deploying an emergency trauma field hospital into the Nineva plains.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Wheaton College in Chicago, Illinois, and a master's degree in International Development, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Civil Society from the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs.



Scott Portman is Regional Director for Middle East and North Africa at Heartland Alliance International (HAI), and has more than twenty years of experience in human rights programming. Throughout his tenure at HAI, Scott has designed and implemented innovative programs in both mental health and access to justice sectors, with a focus on torture treatment, forced migration, human trafficking, gender-based violence, child protection, and programs for religious and ethnic minorities. Scott supports program development efforts and provides technical consultation on mental health and protection projects in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Scott has extensive experience in Iraq, serving as the International Rescue Committee's director in Iraq from 1991-1992, and as program officer for the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance from 1992-1994, also based in Iraq.

Scott started HAI's Iraq programming in 2004. Previously at Heartland Alliance, he served as Associate Director of the National Immigration Justice Center (NIJC), where he worked on asylum, immigration detention reform, human trafficking, and immigration advocacy. He also was Administrative Director of the Marjorie Kovler Center for the Treatment of Survivors of Torture. He is a graduate of the University of New Mexico.