



## U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom Hearing

### Safeguarding Religious Freedom in Northeast Syria

#### Panel



**Amy Austin Holmes** is currently a Fellow at the Wilson Center and Visiting Scholar at the Middle East Initiative of Harvard University, while on leave from her tenured position at the American University in Cairo. A former Fulbright scholar in Germany, she is the author of *Coups and Revolutions: Mass Mobilization, the Egyptian Military, and the United States from Mubarak to Sisi* and *Social Unrest and American Military Bases in Turkey and Germany Since 1945*.

Having spent a decade living in the Middle East through the period known as the Arab Spring, she has published numerous articles on Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, and Bahrain. Professor Holmes is the first person to have conducted a field survey of the Syrian Democratic (SDF) based on numerous trips to all six provinces of Northeast Syria between 2015 and 2019. Her current research is about governance challenges of the semi-autonomous Kurdish-led region of northern Syria. This includes a focus on the protection of minority groups as well as the dilemma of ISIS detainees who are currently held at Al Hol Camp. She has a PhD from the Johns Hopkins University.



**Sara Kayyali** is the Syria researcher in the Middle East and North Africa Division, investigating human rights and international humanitarian law violations in Syria. Prior to joining Human Rights Watch, she was the legal analyst at the Syrian Legal Development Programme, where she provided research and capacity-building support on human rights and humanitarian legal issues arising out of the Syrian conflict. Kayyali previously worked with civil society on regional and international advocacy, and policy-making around key issues in the Arab region as the Policy and Advocacy Program Specialist at the Open Society Foundations - Arab Regional Office. She was also a member of the Human Rights Clinic at Columbia, where she

conducted human rights advocacy and research on the right to housing and civil society engagement with UN Special Procedures. Kayyali holds a double-degree in law from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Columbia Law School.



**Hassan Hassan** is a director of the Non-state Actors and Geopolitics program at the Center for Global Policy. His research focuses on militant movements, nonviolent extremism, and geopolitics in the Middle East. He is a contributing writer at The Atlantic, Foreign Policy and The Guardian. He is the author, with Michael Weiss, of *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*. Hassan was previously an associate fellow at Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa Program in London and a research associate at the Delma Institute in the United Arab Emirates. From 2008 to 2014, he worked on the news and commentary sections at The National, an English-language daily newspaper in the UAE. Hassan has written extensively on Sunni and Shia movements, society, and politics in the Middle East for numerous publications, including the Guardian, Foreign Policy, Foreign Affairs, the New York Times, Financial Times, the Daily Beast and The National. A native of eastern Syria, Hassan received a Master's Degree in International Relations from the University of Nottingham. He is also a senior non-resident fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy in Washington DC.



**Michael Rubin** is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, where he specializes in Iran, Turkey, and the broader Middle East. He also regularly teaches classes at sea about Middle East conflicts, culture, terrorism, and the Horn of Africa to deployed US Navy and Marine units. A former Pentagon official, Dr. Rubin has lived in post-revolution Iran, Yemen, and both pre- and postwar Iraq, and he spent time with the Taliban before 9/11. He is the author, coauthor, and coeditor of several books exploring diplomacy, Iranian history, Arab culture, Kurdish studies, and Shi'ite politics, including *Seven Pillars: What Really Causes Instability in the Middle East*, *Kurdistan Rising*, *Dancing with the Devil: The Perils of Engaging Rogue Regimes*, and *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos*. Dr. Rubin has a PhD and an MA in history from Yale University, where he also obtained a BS in biology.