



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

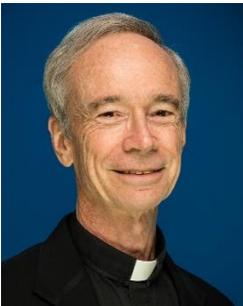
Eritrea: Root Causes of the Refugee Crisis

Panel I



Jana Mason is Senior Advisor for External Relations and Government Affairs at the Washington, D.C. office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). She represents the agency's interests with the U.S. government—particularly the State Department and Congress—and with nongovernmental organizations. Prior to joining UNHCR in 2008, Jana was Director of Government Relations and Advocacy at the International Rescue Committee (IRC). She was previously with the U.S. Committee for Refugees for 11 years, where she served as policy analyst for the Asia/Pacific region and advocated for refugee protection and assistance. Jana has worked in the refugee arena since 1983, which included a position as assistant director of refugee programs for the State of Virginia. She has a bachelor's degree from Boston University, a master's degree from the University of Virginia, and a law degree from Georgetown University.

Panel II



Rev. Thomas J. Reese, S.J., was appointed to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) on May 15, 2014, and reappointed on May 12, 2016, by then President Barack Obama for a two-year term expiring in May 2018. Father Reese also served as Chair of USCIRF from June 2016 to May of 2017. Father Reese is a Senior Analyst for Religion News Service. Formerly he was a columnist at the National Catholic Reporter from 2014 to 2017; he was Editor-in-Chief of America magazine from 1998 to 2005 and an associate editor from 1978 to 1985. He was a Senior Fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center from 2006 to 2013 and from 1988 to 1998. Rev. Reese entered the Jesuits in 1962 and was ordained in 1974. He also is the author of *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*. He received a B.A. and an M.A. from St. Louis University, an M.Div. from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley.

Panel III



Maria Burnett is the Director for the East and Horn of Africa in the Africa Division of Human Rights Watch. She supervises the organization's work on East Africa, with long term-expertise in Uganda, emerging human rights issues in Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia. She has worked with the organization since 2005, first as the Burundi researcher in the Bujumbura field office and later as the Uganda researcher based in Kampala. Before joining Human Rights Watch, Burnett worked as an architect and journalist in Africa. She holds a law degree from Yale Law School, a master's from the Architectural Association in London and a bachelor's in architecture from Princeton University. She has studied at the University of Cape Town, South Africa and Harbin Institute of Technology, China. She speaks French, Italian and Albanian.



Abraham Tesfalul Zere is Executive Director of PEN Eritrea in exile. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in the School of Media Arts and Studies at Ohio University. Before leaving his home country in 2012, he worked as faculty at the University of Asmara; at the College of Arts and Social Science (2004-2012); as a columnist in the state-owned newspaper (2003-2006); and as an editor at Hdri Publishers (2006-2011). Over the last three years, Mr. Zere has written widely for multiple media outlets on Eritrea. His articles have appeared in *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *Al-Jazeera English*, and *Index on Censorship*, among others.