



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Witness Biographies

Human Rights and U.S. Policy in the MENA Region Ten Years After the Arab Spring

Panel I



Philippe Nassif is the Advocacy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty International USA where he works with U.S. government representatives in Congress and the executive branch to ensure that human rights are prioritized and protected across the region. Before coming to Amnesty, Mr. Nassif worked as the executive director at In Defense of Christians in the Middle East where he advocated on behalf of persecuted religious minorities. Before that, he worked at the poverty fighting organization CARE USA, the Obama Presidential Campaign, The White House as part of President Barack Obama's advance team, and for the Mayor of Houston, Texas. Mr. Nassif was named one of "The Hill's" top human rights advocates in 2019 and 2020 due to his work on Yemen and arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In 2020, Mr. Nassif was named a Next Generation Latino Foreign Policy and National Security Leader by the New America Foundation, a 2020 Penn Kemble Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy, and a 2021 Rising Leader at The Aspen Institute.



Sarah Holewinski is the Washington Director at Human Rights Watch, and leads the organization's engagement with the United States government on global human rights issues, with a particular focus on national security and foreign policy. Prior to joining Human Rights Watch, she was the first senior advisor on human rights in the Chairman's Office at The Joint Staff of the U.S. Department of Defense and, prior, served as deputy chief of staff for policy at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations under Ambassador Samantha Power. For nearly a decade Ms. Holewinski was executive director of Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC), leading efforts to advise warring parties on civilian protection and responsible use of force. In that role, she worked extensively with the U.S. military and its allies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, CAR, Burma, and elsewhere.



Samuel Tadros is a Senior Fellow at Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom. At Hudson, he is researching Middle Eastern politics, Islamist movements and religious freedom. He is also the co-host of Sam & Ammar at Al Hurra TV, a program dedicated to covering Middle Eastern political and social developments from a classical liberal perspective. He was previously a Distinguished Visiting Fellow in Middle Eastern Studies at the Hoover Institution, and a Professorial Lecturer at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) where he taught Middle Eastern politics. His articles have previously been published by the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Washington Post, The Atlantic, Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, National Review, World Affairs, and the Weekly Standard. He is the author of *Motherland Lost: The Egyptian and Coptic Quest for Modernity* (2013) and *Reflections on the Revolution in Egypt* (2014) both by Hoover Press.



Sarah Leah Whitson is the Executive Director of Democracy for the Arab World Now, DAWN. Previously she served as executive director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division (2004-2020), overseeing the work of the division in 19 countries, with staff located in 10 countries. She has led dozens of advocacy and investigative missions throughout the region, focusing on issues of armed conflict, accountability, legal reform, migrant workers, and human rights. She has published widely on human rights and foreign policy in the Middle East in international and regional media, including *The New York Times*, *Foreign Policy*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and CNN.



Stephen McInerney is the Executive Director of Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED). Prior to joining POMED, he spent six years living, working, and studying in the Middle East and North Africa – two years each in Egypt, Lebanon, and Qatar. He spent two years in a master's degree program in the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies at the American University of Beirut, one year on a fellowship at the Center for Arab Study Abroad (CASA) at the American University in Cairo, and three years teaching at Cairo American College and the American School of Doha. He has spoken on Middle East affairs with numerous media outlets including BBC, MSNBC, Al Jazeera, and CBS News, and he has testified at U.S. Congressional hearings on human rights and democracy. His writing on Middle East affairs and U.S. policy has been published by Foreign Affairs, the New Republic, Foreign Policy, and the Washington Post.