



**Religion, New Media & Conflict in Syria:**  
*A dialogue among policymakers, experts and religious actors*

**May 7-9, 2014**  
Atlanta

**Overview**

Georgia State University, in collaboration with the Carter Center, is convening a workshop on religion, media and conflict in the Muslim world. The workshop will provide a closed-door forum for a small group of policy makers, experts, and religious actors to think critically about the challenges posed to the international community by the Syrian civil war and ensuing humanitarian crisis. While a number of immediate operational and tactical issues deserve attention, the workshop aims to anticipate and envision solutions to medium and long-term problems such as sectarian conflict, political reconciliation, and nation-(re)building. The project is supported by grants from the British Council and the U.S. Institute of Peace.

## Thursday – May 8, 2014

**8:20:** Group transport from Hotel Ellis to the Carter Center

**8:30-9:00:** Light breakfast and coffee for participants

### **9:00-9:15: Opening Remarks**

- Abbas Barzegar, Assistant Professor of Religion, Georgia State University
- Itonde Kakoma, Itonde Kakoma, Assistant Director, Conflict Resolution Program, Carter Center

### **9:15-10:30: Sectarianism in a Historical Context**

- Religious identity and ideological commitment always shape political behavior, but the Middle East's history of religious diversity, colonialism, and political transition make these particularly contentious issues. What can policy-makers and stakeholders learn from history as they work toward political stabilization in the region?
- Panelists:
  - Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Law, Emory
  - Juan Cole, Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History, University of Michigan
- Moderator:
  - Abbas Barzegar, Assistant Professor of Religion, Georgia State University

**10:30-10:45:** Break for coffee & tea

### **10:45-11:15: Syria—The Challenges that Lie Ahead**

- Hrair Balian (Director, Conflict Resolution Program, Carter Center) will provide a detailed context for the Syrian conflict, emphasizing the sectarian dimensions to the conflict and their impact on creating an environment conducive for peaceful resolution

### **11:15-12:45: New Media & Syria**

- Experts will explore how new media technologies and platforms are utilized by strategic actors to shape debates about who is responsible for the conflict and possible paths toward peace and reconciliation.
- Panelists:
  - HEND Alhinnawi, Co-Founder of Humanitarian Tracker and Syria Tracker
  - Basma Atassi, Journalist, Al Jazeera Network
  - Christopher McNaboe, Head, Syria Conflict Mapping Project
  - Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, Professor, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen
- Moderator:
  - Shawn Powers, Assistant Professor of Communication, Georgia State University

**12:45-2:00:** Lunch

### **2:00-3:15: Methodologies for Understanding Worldview(s) in Negotiation**

- The role of religion in international affairs can no longer be relegated to a secondary or tertiary role. This session explores how policy makers have productively utilized religion in their work on conflict resolution and negotiation.

- Panelists:
  - William Corcoran, President & CEO, ANERA
  - G. Mahmoud Eboo, President, His Highness Prince Aga Khan Shia Imami Ismaili Council (US, AU & NZ)
  - Najeeba Syeed-Miller, Assistant Professor of Interreligious Education, Claremont School of Theology
- Moderator:
  - Nureldin Satti, Chair, UNESCO PEACE FUND

**3:15-3:30:** Break for coffee & tea

**3:30-5:00: Sectarianism & Conflict Resolution**

- What role do religious actors play in negotiating cease-fires, providing humanitarian access, and shifting political alliances in Syria? In the case of extreme sectarian division, are religious actors a liability or asset for the policy making community?
- Panelists:
  - Hrair Balian, Director, Conflict Resolution Program, Carter Center
  - Karen Betts, Counsellor for the Foreign and Security Policy Group, British Embassy
  - Jerry White, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, U.S. Department of State
- Moderator:
  - Akil Awan, Lecturer, Royal Holloway, University of London

**6:00-7:00:** Reception at the Copenhill Café, Carter Center

**7:00: Syria, The Human Toll—Prospects for Reconciliation and Redevelopment (Public Forum)**

- Not since the Rwandan genocide has the world seen a humanitarian crisis like the one caused by Syria’s civil war. As the conflict enters its fourth year nine million people have been displaced, the education system is in ruin and the country’s medical system is near total collapse. With religious extremism on the rise and opposition groups divided, the prospects for peace remain elusive for the near future. While much international attention is focused on political processes that will lead to a cessation of conflict and a peace settlement, Syria’s humanitarian crisis continues to deepen. Governments and private donors are focused on the challenges of meeting immediate needs for food, shelter and medical care. But, what are the prospects for the future? This public discussion with policy, NGO and academic experts provides an opportunity for stakeholders to share their perspectives on the challenges of post conflict reconciliation and redevelopment in Syria.
- Moderator: Jim Clancy, Senior Correspondent, CNN International

**8:45:** Group transport from the Carter Center to the Hotel Ellis

## Friday – May 9, 2014

**8:20:** Group transport from Hotel Ellis to the Carter Center

**8:30-9:00:** Light breakfast and coffee for participants

### **9:00-11:00: Navigating Post-Conflict Identity & Nation-building**

- What is the role of religion in drafting the Syrian constitution? How will emergent institutions address the protection of religious minorities? What are the implications for freedom of expression and new media in a post-conflict, sectarian context?
- Panelists:
  - Hrair Balian, Director, Conflict Resolution Program, Carter Center
  - Bill Long, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Georgia State University
  - Lisa Maguire, Head of the UK Mission to the United Nations Middle East team, British Foreign Service
  - Ben O'Loughlin, Professor of International Relations at Royal Holloway, University of London.
- Moderator:
  - Itonde Kakoma, Assistant Director, Conflict Resolution Program, Carter Center

**11:00-11:15:** Break for coffee & tea

### **11:15-12:30: Reactions, Reflections & Next Steps**

- This roundtable discussion will solicit feedback from each of the workshop's participants to determine concrete next steps and areas for further research
- Moderators:
  - Shawn Powers, Assistant Professor of Communication, Georgia State University
  - Tim Rivera, Program Officer, British Council

**12:45:** Group transport from the Carter Center to Hotel Ellis

## **Panel Structure**

The goal for our forum is a fluid discussion between participants. Each session will have a moderator and be structured to specifically draw on the range of expertise in the room. Moderators will reach out to participants prior to the workshop to discuss specific contributions, which could include presenting research, responding to presentations, or addressing a specific question or questions.

## **Discussion and Attribution Rules**

We have built in significant time for question and answer sessions and roundtable dialogues. We hope that the workshop will be a truly collaborative effort in which all participants feel free to contribute their thoughts and ideas. To encourage free discussion, this closed forum will follow Chatham House Rules (“participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed”). The session will be audio-recorded solely for the purpose of note-taking.

## **Workshop Location**

The workshop will take place in the Cecil B. Day Chapel at the Carter Center: 453 Freedom Parkway NE, Atlanta, GA 30307. Telephone: (404) 420-5100. Transportation from the hotel to the Carter Center is provided. For participants driving themselves, here are directions to The Carter Center: <http://www.cartercenter.org/about/faqs/directions.html>. (You will enter the parking lot through Entrance Number 3, park anywhere to the right in the lower parking lot. You will be entering the Chapel through the Ivan Allen Pavilion Entrance.)

## **Hotel Location**

Participants are staying at the Ellis Hotel in downtown Atlanta (176 Peachtree St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30303). Telephone: (404) 523-5155

## **Transportation from the Airport**

Unless otherwise arranged, participants should take the Marta from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport North on the Red/Orange line 8 stops to Peachtree Center. Upon exiting the Peachtree Center Marta station, follow signs to Ellis St., which leads right to The Ellis Hotel, conveniently located next to the MARTA station.

## **Technology**

A projector is available should you want to use PowerPoint or other audio/visual materials. Wi-fi is also freely available in the room.

# **SYRIA, THE HUMAN TOLL**

**PROSPECTS FOR RECONCILIATION  
AND REDEVELOPMENT**

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**PLEASE JOIN US FOR A  
PRIVATE RECEPTION**

**THURSDAY, MAY 8, 6-7PM  
IN THE COPENHILL CAFÉ AT  
THE CARTER CENTER.**

**KINDLY RSVP TO  
JPHIL22@EMORY.EDU OR 404.727.1438 BY MAY 5.**



# SYRIA, THE HUMAN TOLL

## PROSPECTS FOR RECONCILIATION AND REDEVELOPMENT

**Thursday, May 8 7pm Jimmy Carter Library and Museum**

**Not since the Rwandan genocide has the world seen a humanitarian crisis like the one caused by Syria's civil war.** As the conflict enters its fourth year nine million people have been displaced, the education system is in ruin and the country's medical system is near total collapse. With religious extremism on the rise and opposition groups divided, the prospects for peace remain elusive for the near future. While much international attention is focused on political processes that will lead to a cessation of conflict and a peace settlement, Syria's humanitarian crisis continues to deepen. Governments and private donors are focused on the challenges of meeting immediate needs for food, shelter and medical care. But, what are the prospects for the future? This public discussion with policy, NGO and academic experts provides an opportunity for stakeholders to share their perspectives on the challenges of post conflict reconciliation and redevelopment in Syria.

### Panelists

- Basma Atassi** Journalist, Aljazeera  
**Hrair Balian** Director, Conflict Resolution Program, The Carter Center  
**Karen Betts** Foreign Policy Counsellor, UK Embassy, Washington DC  
**Juan Cole** Professor of History, University of Michigan  
**John Blevins** Associate Professor, Hubert Dept. of Global Health, Emory University

### Moderator

- Jim Clancy** Senior Correspondent, CNN



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**Free and open to the public. Kindly RSVP to [jphil22@emory.edu](mailto:jphil22@emory.edu) or 404.727.1438.**