The ISIS Crisis and the Future of Syria: Options for US Policy

Wednesday, April 8, 2015
5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m., Student Center, Ballroom C

Panel members feature distinguished experts on Syria and the Middle East, including former state department official, Ambassador Fred C. Hof.

Ambassador Frederic C. Hof  Keynote Presentation “Chaos in Syria: Prospects for a Political-Diplomatic Settlement”
Ambassador Frederic C. Hof is a senior fellow in the Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. He came to the Atlantic Council after a career as a US Army officer, a private sector CEO, and a Department of State diplomat. He is a Vietnam veteran and much of his professional life has centered on the Middle East. As a military officer he served on the commission that investigated the 1983 bombing of the US Marine Corps headquarters at Beirut International Airport and drafted key parts of the commission’s report. While in the private sector he took a leave of absence in 2001 to serve as chief of staff of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact Finding Commission, headed by former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, and was the principal drafter of the Commission’s report. In the Department of State from 2009 to 2012 he took the lead in an effort to mediate Syrian-Israeli peace and was given the rank of ambassador in his capacity as special advisor to the secretary of state for transition in Syria. Ambassador Hof also oversaw efforts to reconcile conflicting Israeli and Lebanese exclusive economic zone claims. He is a graduate of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and the Naval Postgraduate School. Ambassador Hof is the author of two works on Middle Eastern boundary issues and numerous articles on Middle Eastern political, security, boundary and water issues. Among his military decorations is the Purple Heart.

Nader Hashemi  Presenting “All Roads Lead to Damascus: Why the Future of ISIS and the Future of Syria are Intertwined”
Nader Hashemi is the Director of the Center for Middle East Studies and an Associate Professor of Middle East and Islamic Politics at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver. He obtained his doctorate from the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto and previously was an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at Northwestern University and a Visiting Assistant Professor at the UCLA Global Institute. He is the author of Islam, Secularism and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies (Oxford University Press, 2009) and co-editor of The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran’s Future (Melville House, 2011) and The Syria Dilemma (MIT Press, 2013).

Rafif Jouejati  Presenting “Freedom and the Voice of the Syrian People”
Rafif Jouejati is a management consultant by profession, but left her career to join the Syrian revolution in April 2011. She founded and is the director of the Foundation to Restore Equality and Education in Syria (FREE-Syria), and serves as spokesperson and executive committee member of the Local Coordination Committees in Syria. She also served as a spokesperson for the Syrian Opposition Coalition during the Geneva II talks. Rafif is also a member of the board of directors of The Day After Association, which developed a transitional framework for Syria in the post-Assad phase. She recently completed the Freedom Charter project, in which activists surveyed more than 50,000 Syrians to answer the fundamental question, “What do Syrians Want?”

Danny Postel  panel discussant
Danny Postel is Associate Director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Denver. His books include The Syria Dilemma (2013) and The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran's Future (2011). He is a co-editor of PULSE and a regular contributor to the Huffington Post and Critical Inquiry. His writings have appeared in The American Prospect, Boston Review, the Cairo Review of Global Affairs, Dissent, The Guardian, Middle East Policy, The Nation, the New York Times, openDemocracy, Salon, and the Washington Post.