

# Counterterrorism, Electoral Politics, and Human Rights

Thursday, April 27, 2017 • University at Buffalo

## PROGRAM

9:00 Registration and Welcoming Remarks

**9:30 Africa**

**Moderator: Ndubueze Mbah**, Assistant Professor of History, University at Buffalo

**“Human Rights in the Context of Elections in Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda”**

Sarah Jackson, Deputy Regional Director, Amnesty International (via Skype)  
*(session description forthcoming)*

**“International Responses to Human Rights Crises in Sudan and Southern Sudan”**

Jehanne Henry, Senior Researcher, Africa Division, Human Rights Watch

Henry will first discuss Sudan and how international responses to the crises there have been fueled by competing priorities, ranging from the defense of human rights and humanitarian situation to Sudan’s role in harboring terrorists. In recent years, however, we have seen a shift toward engagement with the Sudanese government, prompting concerns that Sudan will continue or even intensify its conflicts and other patterns of abuse of its citizens without consequence. Henry will then turn to South Sudan, and discuss how the referendum and internationally-sanctioned processes that led to independence in 2011 failed to address the long legacy of conflict, deep deprivation, or the absence of democratic institutions. The newly independent country soon became mired in a new civil war, largely on ethnic lines, with the current government using repression and violence to maintain its grip on power.

**"Political Process, Inclusion and Citizen Satisfaction with Governance in West Africa"**

Ryan Dalton, Program Officer, Central and West Africa, National Democratic Institute

While conflict is a ubiquitous and healthy part of a democracy, the risk of violence and terrorism mounts when a political system is characterized by weak, unaccountable institutions, exclusive policies that favor some groups at the expense of others, and marginalized groups’ lack of access to political power. This presentation will analyze cases of activists and democrats in West Africa - with a primary focus on Nigeria – who are working to make the political process more inclusive and to hold elected officials to account.

11:00 Lunch

## 12:00 Europe

**Moderator: Tara Melish**, Associate Professor of Law, University at Buffalo

### **“Recasting Refugees as Terrorists: Populist Exploitation of the National Security Narrative in European Electoral Politics”**

Julia Hall, Expert on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, Amnesty International

A number of European politicians have deliberately conflated the refugee crisis with terrorism, raising fear and distrust among their populations of refugees and migrants seeking safe haven in Europe. With elections at state and/or federal levels in Germany, Netherlands, France and Turkey in 2017, this presentation will offer details of the ways that various political leaders have exploited the refugee crisis for electoral gain and how the important work of reestablishing a humanitarian approach to refugee protection must be accompanied by confronting and contesting the notion that refugees bring terrorism to Europe and pose a threat to national security.

### **“European Complicity in U.S. Drone Attacks and Mass Surveillance”**

Eric Topfer, Senior Researcher and Policy Advisor, German Institute for Human Rights

The attempts to hold European governments accountable for their complicity in CIA rendition flights and secret detention have made some progress. However, the prosecution of European complicity in more recent human rights violations in the “global war on terror” is still at an early stage. Using the example of Germany, the presentation outlines how politics and human rights organizations responded to revelations about the role of Ramstein Air Base in the U.S. drone war and the contribution of German intelligence to “targeted killings”. Both issues have been explored in the wider context of the parliamentary investigation of global mass surveillance and counterterrorism cooperation that was launched after the 2013 national elections.

### **“Turkey’s AKP after the July 15 Coup Attempt: Moving towards End Game”**

Howard Eissenstat, Associate Professor, St. Lawrence University

An attempted military coup this past July has shaken Turkey in fundamental ways. The coup itself was a desperate and foolish affair, and, had it succeeded, Turkey would have almost certainly descended into civil war. Political parties from across the spectrum decried it. Taking to social media, Erdoğan called his supporters to the streets, where they faced down tanks. By daylight, the attempted coup was broken. Even his critics expressed admiration and support; Erdoğan’s personal standing had never been higher.

However, Erdoğan used this victory to accelerate his crackdown on potential opposition, detaining more than 100,000, many without charges. Of these, more than 40,000 have actually been arrested. More than 125,000 civil servants have been sacked without pay, more than a hundred journalists detained, and 160 media outlets have been closed outright. Turkey’s once vibrant and diverse civil society has been gutted with more than 1,000 organizations shut down. Turkey’s democracy is in tatters. It now faces an uncertain future of authoritarianism and instability.

## 2:00 United States

**Moderator: Rick Su**, Professor of Law, University at Buffalo

### **“National Security and Human Rights in the U.S.”**

Naureen Shah, Director, Security with Human Rights, Amnesty International

Shah will discuss ways in which the Trump administration has threatened human rights in the name of national security, including through the ban on Muslims and refugees; the climate of anti-Muslim discrimination; and the threats to renew transfers into the Guantanamo detention camp. She will discuss the effectiveness of public resistance and Amnesty International’s vision for sustained and evolving activism. She will also discuss the barriers created by the normalization of a global war paradigm that has existed since the 9/11 attacks.

## 2:00 United States (continued)

### "U. S. Counterterrorism and Human Rights Post Presidential Election"

Laura Pitter, Senior U.S. National Security Counsel, Human Rights Watch

U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump made counterterrorism the cornerstone of his campaign. He said he would unleash unprecedented force against ISIS, take their oil, torture detainees—not necessarily because it works but because they deserve it, load Guantanamo up with some “bad dudes” and block Muslims from coming into the U.S. He garnered enormous support by making these proposals and a lot of voters are expecting him to deliver. But there is a problem – these policies are not only contrary to U.S. values but pursuing them threatens U.S. national security. There are indications that President Trump may be having second thoughts about some of these dangerous campaign ideas and may be backtracking on some of them. This presentation will focus on the dangers these campaign proposals pose, whether there is a chance Trump will reverse them, and the damage many of them have already done to U.S. national security, human rights, the rule of law, and the ability of the U.S. to promote these values globally.

### "National Security and Recent Changes in U.S. Immigration Policy"

Nicole Hallett, Assistant Clinical Professor of Law and Director, Community Justice Clinic, University at Buffalo School of Law

Hallett will discuss the securitization of U.S. immigration policy both before and after the recent election, including the reframing of the U.S. refugee resettlement program, the Central American refugee crisis, and illegal immigration as national security threats. The most high profile of the Trump Administration’s immigration policies is the “Muslim Ban,” which seeks to prevent individuals from six Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States, justified on national security grounds. However, lesser-known policy changes have the potential to affect the human rights of an even greater number of immigrants within the United States. These policies include the broader use of “expedited removal” to deport undocumented immigrants, including asylum-seekers, the drastic expansion of the immigration detention system, the crackdown on sanctuary cities, and a revision of terrorism grounds of inadmissibility. Hallett will discuss these policy changes as well as explore different avenues for protecting the human rights of immigrants affected by them.

## 3:30 Wrap-Up General Discussion



Sponsors: Alison Des Forges Memorial Committee; University at Buffalo Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, Community for Global Health Equity, Department of Comparative Literature, Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Department of History, Humanities Institute, James Agee Chair in American Culture, Department of Philosophy Samuel P. Capen Chair, Department of Political Science, and Office of the Vice Provost for International Education.

This symposium honors the life and work of human rights advocate Alison Des Forges.

For more information, please email Roger Des Forges at [rvd@buffalo.edu](mailto:rvd@buffalo.edu), Ellen Dussourd at [dussourd@buffalo.edu](mailto:dussourd@buffalo.edu), or Shaun Irlam at [irlam@buffalo.edu](mailto:irlam@buffalo.edu)

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## SPEAKERS (in order of presentation)



**Sarah Jackson**, Deputy Regional Director, Amnesty International (via Skype)

Sarah Jackson is Amnesty International (AI)'s Deputy Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region based in Nairobi. She is leading an organizational change process to increase the organization's operations, impact and membership growth in the Global South. Sarah has over a decade of experience working on the Great Lakes region. She previously served AI as Acting Deputy Director of the Africa Programme, Acting Head of the former Africa Regional Office in Kampala, and Rwanda and Burundi Researcher. Before joining AI, Sarah worked for the American Friends Service Committee in Burundi and Human Rights Watch in London. She holds an MSc in Comparative Politics, and a BSc in Government and History from the London School of Economics and Political Science.



**Jehanne Henry**, Senior Researcher, Africa Division, Human Rights Watch

Jehanne Henry supervises and contributes to the work on Sudan, South Sudan, and Chad, and has also worked on Kenya. She has worked with HRW since 2008, focusing initially on the conflict in Darfur, then on a range of other issues in Sudan and South Sudan. Prior to joining HRW, she served as a human rights officer with the United Nations Mission in Sudan based in North Darfur. She has worked on human rights and rule of law issues with USAID in Cambodia and as a legal adviser in the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, and managed a legal aid program with the American Refugee Committee in Kosovo. Henry has also worked in the Office of the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague, and clerked for a U.S. federal judge in New York. She is admitted to the New York state bar.



**Ryan Dalton**, Program Officer, Central and West Africa, National Democratic Institute

Ryan Dalton is a program officer at the National Democratic Institute, backstopping democracy and governance programs in Anglophone West Africa since 2013. He has observed Nigeria's 2015 presidential, 2016 Ondo state off-cycle, and Ghana's 2016 presidential elections. In 2014, Ryan consulted for the U.S. State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, providing big data research on electoral priorities and grievances during Nigeria's 2011 polls. From 2010 to 2012, he served in the U.S. Peace Corps, providing technical assistance to small and medium enterprises and nongovernmental organizations in Togo. He holds a M.A. in international communication from American University and a B.A. in communication from Truman State University.



**Julia Hall**, Expert on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, Amnesty International

Julia Hall is a human rights lawyer and Amnesty International's expert on criminal justice, counter-terrorism and human rights in Europe and Central Asia. She works for AI's secretariat in London. Her work has focused largely on accountability for human rights violations in countries with a history of political violence; asylum and migration; and on violations committed by countries around the world in the context of the global "war on terrorism," including torture and enforced disappearance. She is an expert on national security-related issues, including states of emergency, and is the author of a January 2017 report, "Dangerously Disproportionate: The Ever Expanding National Security State in Europe", which focuses on counter-terrorism developments in 14 EU member states and at the UN, EU, and Council of Europe between late 2014 and December 2016.

Previously, Julia was senior legal counsel in the Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Program at Human Rights Watch, where she worked from 1996-2009. At HRW, she covered the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Bosnia, and researched migration and asylum issues in the EU. After September 11, 2001, she covered counter-terrorism operations by the US and in Europe, including the military commissions at Guantanamo Bay. In July 2008, she monitored the military commission of Salim Hamdan, Osama bin Laden's former driver, at Guantanamo Bay. Julia continues to work on Guantanamo, in particular the resettlement of former detainees in European and other countries and their effective integration.



**Eric Topfer**, Senior Researcher and Policy Advisor, German Institute for Human Rights, Berlin  
Eric Topfer has a background in political science and has been working on policing, surveillance and counterterrorism for more than 15 years. Before joining the German Institute for Human Rights in 2012, he worked as social researcher at the Technical University of Berlin on various projects studying surveillance technologies and urban security, and as research consultant on justice and home affairs in the European Union for the UK-based civil liberties organization Statewatch. His current work at the German Institute for Human Rights focuses on intelligence cooperation and oversight, counterterrorism policies and effective remedies against human rights violations in these areas.



**Howard Eissenstat**, Associate Professor, St. Lawrence University  
Howard Eissenstat is an Associate Professor of Middle East history at St. Lawrence University. He writes on twentieth-century Turkish history as well as on contemporary Turkish politics and foreign policy. He has lectured at the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State and the Canadian Foreign Service Institute. Howard received his PhD in Modern Middle East History from UCLA in 2007 and was a post-doctoral fellow at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University in 2008-2009.



**Naureen Shah**, Director, Security with Human Rights, Amnesty International  
Naureen Shah is the Senior Director of Campaigns at the U.S. section of Amnesty International. She manages AI's work to respond to crisis, including developments arising from conflicts, coups and rapid political changes. She also manages the U.S. section's work to advance human rights in the face of a global refugee crisis, and attacks on free expression and human rights activists. She conducts advocacy with Congress, the UN, the White House, federal agencies, and regional human rights bodies.

Prior to her current role, Naureen directed the national security program at AI USA, served as a lobbyist at the ACLU, and was a clinical instructor on human rights at Columbia Law School. She is the author of several studies on U.S. counterterrorism, including on drone strikes, domestic terrorism investigations and torture. She is a frequent media commentator on U.S. national security policies, having appeared on MSNBC, CNN, the BCC, PRI's *The World*, and several radio outlets. Naureen holds a B.S. from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, cum laude. She holds a J.D. from Columbia Law School.



**Laura Pitter**, Senior National Security Counsel, U.S. Program, Human Rights Watch  
Laura Pitter monitors, analyzes and writes on U.S. national security policies. Prior to joining Human Rights Watch, she was a journalist, human rights advocate, and attorney who practiced in both the public and private sectors. She was a reporter during the war in Bosnia, where she wrote for *Time Magazine* and Reuters News Agency among other media outlets. Following the war, she worked for the United Nations in both Bosnia and post- September 11 Afghanistan as a protection and political affairs officer. After Afghanistan, Laura practiced law for eight years, first as a public defender and later with a product liability law firm, both in New York. Laura holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California at Santa Barbara, a master's in international affairs from Columbia University, and a law degree from the University of San Francisco.



**Nicole Hallett**, Assistant Clinical Professor of Law and Director, Community Justice Clinic, University at Buffalo School of Law  
Nicole Hallett's research focuses on immigration, labor, and civil rights law. She has represented non-citizens for over a decade in deportation proceedings as well as affirmative federal impact litigation. She is a member of the steering committee of the Immigrant Advocate Response Collaborative (iARC), a state-wide coalition of immigrants' rights advocates. She previously taught at the NYU School of Law and Yale Law School. Before academia, she was a staff attorney at the Urban Justice Center in New York City, where she represented labor trafficking victims and other low-wage immigrants. Nicole received her J.D. from Yale Law School and her M.Sc. in Refugee Studies from the University of Oxford. Before law school, she worked at the National Korean Human Rights Commission in Seoul, South Korea.

