

Center for American Progress



SPECIAL PRESENTATION

“IRAQ'S DISPLACEMENT CRISIS AND THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE”

THE NEXT CHALLENGES OF IRAQ'S DISPLACEMENT CRISIS

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MS. MARA RUDMAN: Great. Thanks. I wanted to welcome everyone back into the room, give you a couple more seconds here to get back in here. Great, thanks. And while a few more people are sitting down, I'll just let you know that I'm Mara Rudman, since I'm the person whose name you can forget the most easily here. And I'm the moderator for this panel. I'm very pleased to let you know that we have three folks sitting here who you have bios for, I believe, two of the three in the package. John Merrill, now, I didn't see – is your bio here too? Okay, terrific. Then I'm glad. Maybe I just missed it. So I'm glad it's there.

And we have here Elizabeth Ferris and John Merrill and Kristele Younes, each of whom has a tremendous background in this, all of the issues that we've been discussing today, and they also – often what I'm particularly happy that will be doing with this panel – is to be talking about the, as the title says, the challenges of Iraq's displacement crisis.

But in talking about the challenges, and we've talked about a little bit up here before we start, we'll be talking about it, I hope both in the comments that they'll be offering, but certainly, in the questions and answers as well, in the context of what do we do about these issues in a practical sense going forward? How do we deal with some of these challenges? What are some of the solutions and what do we – what do they have to offer in terms of how we go about solving these issues?

As I said – just to look a little bit at their bios – Elizabeth, who goes by (Bach?)- Ferris will be speaking to you first, and she is at Brookings now as a senior fellow and co-director of the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement. She has worked for two decades in the field of international humanitarian response, working for various NGO groups, most recently in Geneva, Switzerland. But she comes from a background in both academia, as well as in the NGO world, and has written some very interesting work on some of the intersection of security issues with humanitarian response issues, and as I said, I hope will address some of the practical need for communities who don't generally talk with each other about how you address some of these issues – in addressing them.

And John Merrill is with us from the Department of Defense. And John is – no, I understand – regional background – is in Latin America, as well as a number of other regions, but is the – John is the director for refugees, internally displaced persons, and parole programs at the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Middle East Iraq office, so has a very challenging portfolio, to say the least, at the Department of Defense at this point and will be able to talk to us about the work he's doing there.

And Kristele Younes is with us from Refugees International. She's an advocate there. Kristele – and I already warned the panel that I'd be doing a prog for the work that she's done for the Middle East Bulletin, which is the publication of Middle East Progress at the Center for American Progress. She wrote a tremendous piece for us, a regional

commentary piece, on the refugee situation in the region focused on the situation in Lebanon that I believe she wrote for us a couple of months ago.

So I recommend that piece to all of you and welcome such terrific regional commentaries, as well from others who are interested in writing for us as well. And also, Kristele, we didn't get as much a chance to talk about it, but I know that Refugees International recently has put out a report as well that – I spoke to the other panelists about it – that has some very specific policy recommendations, that again, it's the kind of useful thing I hope that we'll be able to talk about more here on the panel.

So if we can start, we'll get some comments from each of the panelists and then move into some questions and answers. So, Beth, if we would start with you.

MS. ELIZABETH FERRIS: Thank you very much. Not surprisingly, I'm going to talk about internally displaced persons in Iraq, IDPs. This has been a theme that we've heard throughout the morning, the need to address the situation of IDPs. Briefly, there were about one million IDPs in Iraq before the U.S.-led invasion, and about 1.2 to 1.3 million more recently, for a total of about 2.2-2.3 million. I should say the data are very difficult to collect. Different sources report different numbers, use different standards, and we know actually not nearly as much as we should about who the IDPs are and how they came to be where they are.

We know from other displacement situations, however, that in general, people with more resources are able to travel further and that the people who stay closer to home, with some exceptions, tend to be those with fewer resources or ability to travel or get out of the country, or with language skills or professional skills, and so forth. So we – I think it's – we can probably assume that the IDPs in Iraq are at least as needy or as vulnerable as the refugees in surrounding countries.

As several people have mentioned this morning, over lunch, this is an urban caseload. Most of the IDPs are located in Baghdad, the vast majority of them, almost all of them, in cities. They're not living in camps. Less than 1 to 2 percent of IDPs are in camps, which, in part, explains why they've been invisible until the past year. They were there for a long time, living with families, friends, communities, renting houses, real estate agents in Iraq who would arrange swaps between Sunnis and Shi'as, so that they could live in neighborhoods where their sect was in a majority.

We know, for example, that those – that displacement has been both a cause and a consequence of the sectarian polarization. People are moving from mixed neighborhoods into neighborhoods where their particular sect is in a majority.

We know that there are serious humanitarian needs for shelter, food, health services, that the lack of humanitarian assistance, or adequate humanitarian assistance, is one of the causes of displacement. I think that's true not only inside Iraq, but indeed, in the region. Some of the refugees that we interviewed in Syria, for example, said that they left the country because they couldn't get healthcare and "My wife was pregnant. We

were worried the clinic was controlled by a particular militia, so we went to Syria.” So there seems to be a clear link between internal and external displacement.

It’s a good thing that IDPs are not living in camps, although it’s perhaps easier to deliver humanitarian assistance when they are organized and concentrated in particular issues. But you see, the IDPs are not only an issue of humanitarian concern, but they’re also security issues. And here to refer to what Mara said, I’ve been really struck this past year or two with the fact that different communities, speaking different languages and often speak past each other, the humanitarian organizations – and that’s my background – are really – don’t like to touch security issues because of a fear that by doing so, you’re contributing to a perception that IDPs or refugees are the problem. They’re potential terrorists. They are a threat.

It’s kind of a blame the victim sort of way of looking at things. And yet, some of those who look at security issues, when they do talk about refugees or IDPs, do so in a way that’s quite simplistic, referring to them – seeing them only in terms of the potential threat that they pose and not in terms of human beings who have lost almost everything and that there are specific measures that could be taken.

The fear is that if IDPs were in camps that they will become targets for sectarian violence, that militias or politicized groups would get control of the distribution of food and other relief items. And there’s reason to fear that when you look at patterns of humanitarian assistance inside Iraq now, it’s not only the Red Crescent, and more than 200 Iraqi NGOs who are working to provide humanitarian assistance and Iraqi staff of some international organizations, but the militias themselves are delivering humanitarian assistance, in some cases, controlling clinics and distribution of relief goods in a way that also is contributing to the sectarian polarization. So the fear is that if IDPs were in camps – and Kristele might say something later – it may be a similar situation with the refugees, that they would tend to be organized along sectarian lines, tend to be targets, tend to be dominated by militias, and could also be centers for recruitment into various groups.

My number one recommendation for IDPs in Iraq is to ensure that they have livelihoods. The lack of jobs is a security issue, as well as a humanitarian issue. We know that desperate people do desperate things. We’ve seen increases, for example, in prostitution, particularly in neighboring countries where it’s been more documented. The rise in banditry – maybe you saw the article this week in the *Washington Post* that said that one of the reasons that people are joining insurgent groups is because they’re getting paid for it. They’re saying, “I’m not joining for ideological reasons, but I cannot feed my family any other way and here people are offering money and cash,” so to ensure livelihoods, which of course, is not an easy task, but it seems to be a security issue and not just one of human rights, human dignity, and humanitarian concerns.

We talked a little bit this morning about the situation of returns. I think that as we think longer term, the issue of returns, hopefully voluntary returns – I think some of us really fear that the returns won’t be voluntary and we’ve seen the number of governments inside Iraq that are closing their borders to most IDPs, unless, in some cases, they can show that they were born there or living there, and so forth. The need to consider the

pace, the timing of turns, we've seen in other situations, if lots of people go back very quickly, it threatens not only to overwhelm the infrastructure, the delivery of services, but can also cause political tensions, depending on how their return is carried out. The need for adequate support for returnees, whether refugees or IDPs, and returning refugees usually get a lot more support than returning IDPs, but to be able to start new lives and to begin.

We've seen in other research we've done the close relationship between IDPs and peace. Half of all peace agreements that are concluded are followed by an outbreak of violence and often, it's because IDPs aren't able to resume their lives, aren't going back to their place of origin, or unable to support themselves where they – in their place of displacement to begin new lives. But it's really essential to consider this, not only for the humanitarian perspective, but also for long-term stability in Iraq.

We mentioned at lunchtime – Ahmed mentioned leaving his house behind. Property issues are crucial in internal displacement. Look at the – 12 years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord, there are still 500,000 Bosnians who aren't able to go back, both refugees and IDPs, mainly because of property issues. The Bosnia case is the one where the international community has the most experience, and it was a terribly long and expensive process.

And you look at Iraq, Iraq is dealing with hundreds of thousands of property claims now, during the Saddam Hussein regime, and the cutoff date is March 2003 for processing of those claims. Nothing has been done, or very little has been done so far, to address the property claims of those who've been displaced since March of 2003, and yet this will be a big issue.

There are two things that could be done right now to help make things easier in the future, thinking long term. One is for the Iraqi government to announce that property titles will be respected, that people who sold their houses under duress, had a forced signing of contracts, that those will be adjudicated or thrown out, that people have a right to their property. They have a right to have it returned, if possible, and if not, to be compensated for it. It may be that someone is living in another part of the country and doesn't ever want to go back to his or her neighborhood, yet selling that house or that computer or that car could provide resources to enable that IDP to begin a new life elsewhere. So the Iraqi government could make it clear that property rights will be respected.

Secondly, and something that the Iraqi government has begun to do, is they've developed a little one-page form that IDPs and refugees and others who've been – had property loss, they could list. This is a property I left behind. This is the house. This is where it is, any authenticating documents they have. Sometimes, when you're forced to flee, you don't remember to take the title or your registration form for your car or your serial number from your computer, but if there's some way of documenting to be used hopefully in the short term, but probably in the long term, that would be something very concrete that could be done.

Finally, just one word in terms of future challenges, look carefully at Northern Iraq. This has been an area of great stability. It's been – a lot of IDPs are there, a lot of minority IDPs are living in the Northern provinces. But there are two things, at least two things, which are quite troubling. One is the question of the referendum, originally supposed to be in November. Now, Lord knows when it will be, how it will be carried out, how the demographics and the movement of people will affect that referendum if it does take place. And if it doesn't take place, what are the consequences for future displacement?

And secondly, Turkey and the PKK. I'm sure you all heard about the incursions recently of – the PKK attacks and then the Turkish incursions with 100,000 Turkish troops along that border. If that region were to become less stable, the potential for more IDPs in Iraq, at a time when these internal barriers are going up, could be catastrophic. Thanks.

MS. RUDMAN: Thanks, Beth.

John?

MR. JOHN MERRILL: Hello. I appreciate the opportunity to attend this conference and I'm a little trepidacious about speaking to it, but it fits in well with our attempt within the Defense Department to be a burr under the saddle of the normal bureaucracy that takes care of the kinds of issues we've been discussing today.

The Defense Department doesn't have any mission to aid refugees or internally displaced, nor does it have any funding to do so. However, it always has the implicit mission of stepping in when something goes wrong, especially when it goes wrong in a major way. For that reason, beyond normal humanitarian concerns, my office began to take – pay closer attention to the issues of both refugees and IDPs earlier this year, which is when I joined. I don't have a predecessor, so I can't – don't have anybody to blame.

The fact that we are attending to this issue with a couple of full-time people now is new to the Defense Department. It occurs because we envisage the potential for serious problems if some sort of political arrangement is brokered for Iraq without dealing seriously with this problem.

It is, in many ways, similar to problems I've encountered previously in very diverse areas, most recently in Haiti and in Columbia, with people who are displaced and there is – simply is no mechanism, no reliable mechanism, either to count them or to return them or to provide them with social services or to provide them with security. We imagine that the precipitous return of refugees, for whatever reason, will create additional security demands for U.S. forces. We've already seen the Iraqi government saying yesterday or the day before, that while they encourage returns, and in fact, have staged some of these refugees returns, that – and paid the bus fare – that in fact, they don't have the capacity to accept them in Iraq at this point and to provide them the services they need.

As often as not, we don't know why Iraqis are moving in the directions they are moving. One of my charges is to learn that and it's a tough task. The appearance we see is something of a Hobson's choice for Iraqis, who may be in Syria, where their visa is expiring, no job, and no schooling for their kids. They may not have a choice about returning, but that doesn't mean that there were the incentives in place to make them believe that returning would be a good solution, a good outcome for themselves or for their families.

We see what partner – what looks like Balkanization of Iraq, and in some cases, that's rationalized as the price of peace, that only when you have ethnically and sectarily (ph) homogenous neighborhoods will people stop killing each other at the rate that they're doing or have been doing. It reminds me a little of South Africa, decades ago.

So the problem is huge. The size of the refugee problem, everybody's commented on as being the largest movement of people in the Middle East since 1948, and the fastest-growing refugee crisis in the world. The response has been tepid. I track – and I'm speaking for myself here, I'm not giving the official positions – the attention in the U.S. government to this issue in a serious way to February of this year. At that time, it was recognized in part and with the encouragement of very negative articles in the *Washington Post* and elsewhere, that we weren't bringing anybody out, to speak of, that the refugee missions here were next to zero, and that a lot of countries with much less of a political or strategic stake in Iraq, were doing far better than we were. And we had our excuses. The principal one, I recall from the time, was that we didn't have a good way to security-screen potential resettlement candidates. That was solved in May when biometric screening through fingerprinting was instituted.

Steps have been taken. An interagency taskforce on refugees and IDPs was established by Secretary Rice in February. I've been sitting on it ever since, or more recently, not sitting on it because it doesn't meet. And one has to ask oneself, with this level of challenge that we're facing, why is the U.S. government on vacation from this issue? I can say that because I'm eligible to retire at any time. (Laughter.) And there clearly are dedicated people within the government who are attending to this issue as best they can, but the reality is, this government, like any government, is – our government is hypersensitive to criticism that we are not accommodating a population that, if we didn't create, we certainly played a big hand in creating, and if that sunshine from the *Post* and the *Times* and others is what's needed to get us going, fine. That's okay. But we're not getting going. And we are trying to understand the flows of people and what they mean as a first step to knowing what to do with them

When we hear an announcement that 30,000 Iraqis are returning to Baghdad from Syria, they're returning because they have a self-motivated belief that conditions are secure and a job is available. Are they occurring because their Syrian visa has expired? Are they returning because their children can't go to school? Are they returning because their teenage daughter was sold into prostitution? What are the motivators? Are they returning to renew a visa so they can go back? It's hard to know and the landscape in Iraq is not the landscape they left, even if they left just a year or two ago.

In many cases, it's simply practically impossible for people to return to their home neighborhoods under current circumstances. If the question is, do you build new neighborhoods? Do you provide – (unintelligible) – solutions? I don't think anybody knows the answer, but clearly, if four and half million refugees and displaced persons become four and a half million displaced persons inside Iraq, that's not a recipe for Iraqi security.

The – one little aspect because it relates to something that was said this morning. My title says something about refugees, IDPs, and parole programs. That has nothing to do with Sing Sing. As many of you may know, parole is a process by which foreign nationals can be brought to United States without a visa, even without a passport. It's an authority vested in the attorney general, delegated to the secretary of Homeland Security, and utilized by various agencies to evacuate people quickly when they're at risk, if they require urgent medical care that's not available in their home country, and so forth.

That is the only program I manage, refugees and IDPs – my role is more of an observer. In that program, yes, we can evacuate people quickly, but it's a by-exception process. It doesn't address, and it has no statistical effect on, the vast majority of refugees or IDPs. It's a program that – (unintelligible) – a few hundred people a year. If it were multiplied tenfold, it wouldn't change the statistics.

The issue is not how to expand small programs that work, but only work because they're exceptional, but how to deal with the larger masses. Too often, I see efforts of my government focused on dealing with, in an equitable fashion, people who have assisted the U.S. in Iraq, and there are lots of them, no objection to that. But special immigrant visa is not going to satisfy the needs of over four million people, a few thousand maybe, depending on legislation – (unintelligible) – and SIV in fact, is very much like parole. We just have different rules. Sometimes, when a person doesn't qualify for SIV, the State Department sends him to me to try to parole them in. Sometimes, we can't.

But the program has no funding. It is entirely voluntary. The sponsorship of parolees, their transportation to the U.S., their care and feeding when they're here, and so forth, is all done on a charitable basis, ether by people who are working or have worked in Iraq, have experience in these areas, charitable organizations, and others because there simply is no budget. We're grateful for the authority, even without the budget, I must say, but it is the mechanism that's used to take out mostly people to whom you are indebted – you have no other options – and in some cases, people who are higher profile, but we want to get here quickly. Judge Radhi, who recently testified before the Congress about corruption in Iraq, was one of our parolees.

When people come into that process, it's not a permanent solution because they – because by its nature, it's temporary. It does not convey immigration status. It theoretically expires in 90 days or a year, depending on how they're paroled. What it does do is – what it's not supposed to do, but nonetheless, is a *de facto* consequence, it lets people apply for asylum from a safe place. Because the process is one in which we must cooperate with Homeland Security, and then what is our first and foremost to

protect us from people who might come here and do us harm, there are obviously some cross-purposes at work. Nonetheless, we – well, step back one step more.

One of the first pieces of paper I saw after taking this job was a letter from David Petraeus to Prime Minister Maliki in March of this year saying, “We have this big IDP problem. What are we going to do about it? We need to get together and work on it. We need to set up a mechanism that deals with this problem in an effective way.” I don’t know if that letter was answered, but I do know the process is not in place.

Nonetheless, either for humanitarian reasons or because – or selfish departmental reasons, because we know what happens when these situations go wrong, the Defense Department wants to, without taking over this mission, strongly encourage all those who have responsibility for it – and principally, the two departments I’ve mentioned, but there are others – to get about the business of planning for effective resettlement of both refugees and IDPs, hopefully, without simply enshrining sectarian segregation by neighborhood, but whether not that’s practical to contemplate, I don’t know.

It’s a challenge that we have faced in various countries, at various times throughout our history. It is a challenge to which we come very late in this particular conflict. Numbers have been cited for how many people arrived here from Indochina in the closing years after the Vietnamese war and others, and they’re much bigger numbers.

The comment about a presidential initiative in this area, I think was a good comment. Dr. Hakki’s idea about temporary refuge for IDPs, which I picked up on the back table and haven’t had a chance to read yet, is motivated by the appropriate recognition that these people aren’t going to just go away, and that one of the curiosities that we see in Iraq is when we see – when we have seen – up until the last couple of months – when we have seen diminution of violence, that didn’t necessarily mean diminution of departures. It didn’t necessarily mean that the people were leaving at a slower rate and that the 1,000 or 2,000 a day seemed to be sort of a constant.

Now, we’re seeing countervailing stories to the effect that people are returning without the conditions having been set for that return, and my bosses were saying to me, “Is that true? Which way is the river flowing?” Well, it’s flowing in both directions, but the more important question is why and what are going to do about it?

We anticipate that eventually, when something is – eventually, when a plan is devised for this, that the U.S. will have to play a big part in it and that the DOD will be tasked by one means or another, since we do have all the airplanes and all the people, to assist greatly, but we hope it’s in an organized fashion, rather than a conflict situation.

I don’t have anything else useful to say. (Laughter.) (Applause.)

MS. RUDMAN: Thank you, John, and I think we’ll actually probably get some more useful things for you to say when we ask you some questions.

Kristele?

MS. KRISTELE YOUNES: Thank you very much. Thank you very much for inviting me today. It's always a challenge to speak after best, but it's also going to be a chance to speak after John, who's got to be the most candid government official I've ever heard. (Laughter.)

I am first going to speak about the challenges as they exist today with respect to the refugee population mostly, but I'll also touch a little bit on the IDP population, although Beth has covered this quite extensively. And then I'd like to talk a little bit about the challenges in terms of the responders to this crisis, both in the region and the international community and mostly here in the U.S., and the way ahead and what needs to be done according to Refugees International and many other civil society groups to address the very, very huge crisis we're facing today.

In terms of the challenges that we're facing now and the current transit we're seeing, and hopefully, that do not reflect necessarily what the future is holding because it's pretty bleak, the main concerns right now with respect to the refugees are in various sectors. First of all, in terms of humanitarian challenges and humanitarian concerns, obviously, the response has been inadequate. The UN is currently doing what it can to address the crisis in the region with very limited budgets. They are currently out sending appeals that have not been fully funded. I wanted to ask Mr. Brender this morning why the European Commission had not contributed to the education or the health appeal. I hope I'll be able to ask him at the end of the session.

But there are many appeals currently and many organizations that are trying to address the refugee crisis in the region and that they are doing so on very small budgets. And moreover, as UNHCR has underlined over and over again, the UN and the international community, international organizations, cannot address the full scope of the refugees needs without the assistance of governments who would provide bilateral assistance to the host countries and who would enable them to strengthen their own systems to be able to respond to this adequately. And unfortunately, this hasn't happened yet.

The humanitarian challenges are going to be very severe, I believe. Right now, what we're seeing is that it's an entire generation of Iraqi children who's not going to school. And that sounds sad, but no more than that really, but in fact, it is quite tragic for many reasons, the first of them being the nature of Iraq itself, and the nature of Iraqi society. I'm Lebanese and I grew up with parents looking up to Iraq as being the most educated population in the Middle East. It used to be a country we would all admire in the Middle East, and now it's an entire generation that's not going to get an education. And that to Iraqis is heartbreaking.

I've interviewed many Iraqi families who were on one meal a day to be able to afford to send one of their children to school. And this is how much this nation values education.

In terms of healthcare, we're also falling short of meeting the main needs. A lot of people have cancer; a lot of people have diabetes. And they're not receiving treatment in the current countries of asylum.

So that's just to name a couple of the humanitarian challenges we're looking at right now and who – that are not going to improve unless the assistance generally improves.

The protection situation has been also deteriorating quite badly throughout the Middle East, and that's also something that is a trend and that's unfortunately likely to continue unless, again, the response from the international community improves.

We've heard earlier about the situation in Lebanon. We've heard also about the fact that Syria has closed its borders at Iraq's request. Jordan has closed its borders a while ago. I was in Egypt recently and many families were separated because Egypt has also closed its borders. Egypt has signed the '51 Convention, but doesn't quite respect it.

And throughout the region, refugees are becoming more and more anxious of being arrested, detained, deported back to where they perceive to be, right or wrongly, a certain death. And certainly, I'm not going to say they're wrong to believe that this would happen to them. And I think again, the protection situation will continue to deteriorate unless again, the international response improves drastically.

Then, another challenge we're currently seeing, and I think we will be seeing again growing in the future, is security. We are criticizing the countries in the region for closing their borders and for refusing Iraqis and we should – as international organizations, as humanitarian organization, we should hold countries to a higher standard, but we also need to be pragmatic. These countries are fragile. These countries have existing sectarian tensions, existing political tensions. And instead of pointing the finger and blaming them, we need to find ways to really assist and try to help on the security level.

I was having this discussion with my family in Lebanon, who is extremely hostile to the idea of having Iraqis come into the country, and who's arguing the fact that Lebanon has enough problems and 400,000 Palestinians and a lot of political killings, and we don't need this on top of that. And that is the widely held perception throughout the Middle East. Now, we can disagree with it, but there are ways to assist them in dealing with the security issues without barring the road to civilians, without sending civilians back.

In terms of security, which we're looking at as well, is an entire generation of people who may become disenfranchised, who may be moving into – more and more into what we call lowest areas. In Lebanon, for instance again, many Shi'as are moving into Hezbollah-controlled territories, not because they're sympathetic to Hezbollah, but simply because the state of Lebanon is not present there. They don't have checkpoints. They don't control them. Similarly, a lot of Sunnis are moving into Palestinian camps also because rent is cheaper. But again, the fact that there is no adequate assistance for

these people has created a vacuum, and history has shown us in the Middle East that when there is a vacuum, it's usually filled by non-state actors. And those non-state actors have not always been acting in the interest of the international community or the U.S., for that matter, in the past. And that's something to be cognizant of.

I think another trend that is happening right now and that we – has been discussed today, has been returns. And that's something Refugees International is particularly concerned about right now. Obviously, as a refugee organization, we're not against returns. We think returns are great, but when they happen in safe, dignified, and voluntary conditions. And we are extremely doubtful that this is the case for the returns today.

Elizabeth has mentioned many of the challenges that returnees can face. Some of them have to do with property. Some of them have to do with not being able to go back to their place of origin because of sectarian cleansing, et cetera. And what about the minorities? What about Christians who are from Baghdad and who don't have a particular area within Baghdad they can return to? What about Mandaeans? What about Sabaeans? These people need solutions, defined solutions, before they can actually return in security and in peace, and that still hasn't been really worked out by the international community. That's definitely going to be a challenge over the next few years, I believe.

Since time is limited, I won't really touch on the IDPs because Beth has quite – spoken about it quite extensively, but I just want to talk about a little bit the main – the other main issue of concern for us with the vulnerable populations of Iraq, which is the minorities that I just mentioned, but also the Palestinians of Iraq, who have been slaughtered since the beginning of this crisis. And about 15,000 of them remain in Baghdad today and are at great risk, and nothing has been done to assist them despite UNHCR's various pleas for countries to resettle them, despite people basically screaming genocide. These people are going to get massacred; nobody really has raised a finger.

And it is extremely important that this community here, and the world in general, gets mobilized around these Palestinians, who, granted, still have a right to return to historic Palestine, but for the moment, will not be able to do so. And therefore, resettlement is the only possible issue for these people. And this is the only possible current solution for these people. And this is something we need to work at as a community.

Now, I'd just like to talk a little bit about the main responders to this crisis and what I think are the main challenges and the transfer for the next couple of years, and the first responders, I think, is the UN. The UN has been in the region at least doing the best it can in very difficult circumstances. I think UNHCR has been actually quite amazing in the way it reacted in the past few years. It's not necessarily the case in every region of the world, but certainly in the Middle East, they've been doing a really good job in the past couple of years.

I think UN agencies have been more slow to really start working on this, but they have thankfully, and hopefully, this will continue, although we are concerned that there will be eventually donor fatigue. And it is very important right now to seize the momentum and to seize the fact that people are talking about this to make sure that there are commitments to follow through during the next few years. It is possible that people return very fast. It's also possible that it's going to take a generation or two for people to return, even if the situation stabilizes. So we really need commitment from the international community to assist the UN.

Another major challenge we see is for the role of the UN within Iraq. Until now, the UN has mostly had a political role within Iraq to support Iraq institutions. It's within UN's mandate to do that. And the humanitarian role of the UN in Iraq is not quite dissociated from its political role. It makes it extremely difficult really for the UN to carve humanitarian space for itself within Iraq.

There's a new humanitarian coordinator right now, David Shearer, but he's also double-hatted as the deputy's special representative of the secretary general, and being double-hatted will not help him really accomplish his humanitarian mandate. It's not his fault. It's the way the system is made, but it's a deficient system. And it's going to be very, very difficult for the UN to actually fulfill its humanitarian mandate in Iraq.

Now, I'd like to talk a little bit about the U.S. role in the region and here, actually in the way it's been responding to this crisis and the challenges according to us in the couple of years to come.

For starters, there still is a lack of acknowledgement. Juliette has mentioned it and I think she's very right. Part of the reason things are not happening is that President Bush and Secretary Rice don't seem to be particularly seized of the matter. The day we'll have President Bush saying, "I want to make this happen. Please make it happen," perhaps it will happen, but for the moment, it hasn't. Also an acknowledgement would go a very long way in restoring U.S.'s credibility in the region; acknowledging the fact that the whole region has suffered the impact of the war would go a long way toward reconciling with the region.

The second challenge in Refugees International's view is getting over this resettlement versus assistance debate. We firmly believe that the two are extremely important, but resettlement, for some reason, has been given a lot of attention in the U.S., much more than what assistance has been given. The media have been covering resettlement in a tremendous way and it's great, but at the same time, we all know that it's going to be a minority of people who are going to be resettled. We wish them well, obviously, but we need to also worry about the four-million-plus who are going to remain in the region.

Also within the context of resettlement, we also feel that we need to get over this Iraqi allies versus the rest of the refugees debate. In my view, it creates an us versus them distinction, and it's not helpful to the debate. I feel very strongly that those who have worked for the U.S. should, of course, be resettled to the United States, but so

should the people who are part of the 11 criteria of vulnerability that UNHCR has determined.

There should be two separate programs, but certainly, admitting former Iraqi allies should, in no way, impede the numbers of Iraqis that the U.S. government is willing to admit on its normal resettlement program, which leads me to assistance. Given that resettlement is a small component, one of the main challenges, according to me, in the next couple of years is going to be assistance.

Multilateral assistance, obviously, the usual 30 percent contribution to the UN budget is not enough, and it's not going to cut it in this particular case. The U.S. has to show particular leadership in responding to this crisis, but also bilateral assistance. Again, we've seen very little. In 2003, the U.S. provided Jordan with \$700 million in economic assistance to make up for the blow of the war. Four years later, the blow of the war is there. This assistance is nowhere to be seen and the region is very aware of the fact that if there was political will, the money would come. So there is growing resentment in the region and certainly, a growing need for this assistance.

Also what has been majorly lacking in terms of the U.S. response has been political engagement with Syria, of course, but also throughout the region.

When I was in Cairo, I had the honor of meeting with the secretary general of the Arab League, Ambassador Moussa, and he told us that neither the Department of State, nor the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, had ever contacted him about regional responses to this crisis. It's the Arab League. It's the only regional organization that exists in the Arab world, and yet, it hasn't been contacted.

Similarly, the countries that worry about the security, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, are all allies of the U.S., and yet, there's been very few high-level discussions about that very issue. And also the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration doesn't have a senior level staff in the region to coordinate assistance and resettlement. That sends a very wrong message to the region. The message that is being sent today is that this is not a priority for the U.S. government. And this is a message that's being heard loud and clear in the region.

I think another major challenge is going to be this whole debate around withdrawal. We don't have a position on withdrawal, but our position is that no matter what the decision is, certainly, the humanitarian situation and the well being of Iraqi civilians, both in and outside of the country, should be part of the discussion. And we have yet to hear any politician, Republican or Democrat, really talk about this. People are predicting refugee crises. They're already here. People are saying that we'll provide some assistance. What kind of assistance? Show us some plans, some longer term plans, et cetera. They're still lacking.

And finally, I think one of the biggest challenges is the refusal to see this Iraqi crisis in the context that it exists in, which is the Middle East. The Middle East has been through the Palestinian crisis and has still not recovered. And until the Palestinian issue

is solved, nothing else is going to be solved. And Bill was talking earlier about trying to get Jordan and Syria to reopen their borders. He was talking about resettling some of the people who are in Jordan and Syria. I – we haven't really thought about that recommendation, but to me, the best way of getting Jordan and Syria to solve these issues – to reopen their borders, the best way to getting Lebanon to consider granting Iraqis some type of temporary status is to start looking seriously about solutions for the people who have been made refugees 60 years ago, and still haven't had any durable solution offered to them. And until we link the Iraqi crisis to the Palestinian one, and until we seriously look at the Palestinian issue, nothing is going to get a result in the region.

And finally, and I know I'm speaking way too much, but finally, my last words are going to be the challenges for us, civil society, and our groups working here in the U.S. and the international community in general. I think we really need – we have the momentum here and there are many of us who are working very hard on this issue and whose work has been tremendous. I think we really need to work much more together, to stop – to not duplicate our efforts and to work – to speak with one voice when it comes to certain issues. We have common recommendations. Instead of having them repeated in 10 different reports, let's all get behind one paper. Let's all get behind one statement. And let's try to make this happen.

Elizabeth Campbell at Refugee Council USA and InterAction have been very active in trying to get us together, but we need to really take some of our time – none of us has the time – but to coordinate a little bit more and to try to speak in one voice when possible. Thank you.

MS. RUDMAN: Thank you very much to – (applause) – to each of our panelists. I know – I'm sure there's a tremendous interest in questions out there and I have a couple of my own that I'm going to ask. I'm going to ask my questions together here so that we can turn to questions from all of you that much sooner. And I want to lead off first, and I think we each tend to both speak from where we sit and also, I think, listen from that perspective as well.

So it really struck me when all of you were talking both in how much a number of these issues with respect to the Iraqi refugees, or internally displaced people, are linked in the need to have a comprehensive approach to the region, and not just with respect to Iraq. You brought up – they're clearly linked to the Palestinian refugee question. But also more generally, I know Refugees International made the strong recommendation about the need to return an ambassadorial-level representative in Syria. I think I've seen that in other writings as well. We need to have that kind of contact.

The issues going on in Lebanon right now, I think a number of the issues indirectly that you all have spoken of link to what happened in Annapolis and related to some of the feedback of a number of countries that were in Annapolis. If there is the opportunity to have the outreach, the outbreak at that point on some of these other questions. So from what I said, I'd be curious about whether – are any of you aware whether the issues that you raised, the questions on refugees and the interlinked issues that have been raised at the deputies' level, or at the principals' level at National Security

Council meetings, because that's part of where the kind of coordination on these issues and the ability to follow through on these issues, would be raised.

I appreciate the point of the president being seized with this issue, but on a practical level, in terms of implementing it, that's where you see the results and that's where you see the ongoing pressure to agencies. So I guess that's one question I would just throw up in terms of whether there's been any evidence of that, whether since February – and you mentioned your taskforce, but as ongoing matters. That's my general question.

Then the follow-up I'd have for each of you, which may be a tougher question, is if, Kristele, you woke up tomorrow and you were UN secretary general. John, you woke up tomorrow and you were secretary of defense. Beth, you woke up tomorrow and you were secretary of state. And you, understanding the importance of this issue, but also understanding all the other issues on your plate, and you could do one thing on this issue, what would you do?

Understanding – again, you're well versed obviously, in this, but also in where the puts and takes are with everything else. And I know it's unfair to decide who goes first, but Beth, if you could –

MS. FERRIS: The first I'd do would be to set up really a comprehensive planning process. I think one of the major problems in Iraq we're seeing is in the lack of plans, one, that address the complexity of the issue, that bring in all the players, that include Iraqis in the process. This isn't an U.S.-imposed thing, but if I were secretary of state, which would be interesting, that's my first priority.

MR. MERRILL: I second that, but I – my more – (unintelligible) – concern is I think we need agreement within the U.S. before we can take a strong position internationally. And I'm not so much concerned by a lack of agreement as I am by a lack of attention. There are all kinds of issue, some of them small, some of them large, afflicting both the handling of refugees generally, and the resettlement of those who come here, that are casualties of bureaucratic wars.

We need to have the Department of Homeland Security, which does the original interviewing and so forth of these people, work more closely with the State Department to find a process that it is much more efficient. That's a choke point. It has been a choke point for – since the war began. And small steps have been taken to try to fix it, but they haven't worked. So resolving positions within the government and articulating a plan that we can take to our international partners, I think is a first step.

MS. YOUNES: Well, I'd probably call my mother first and let her know that I finally have a decent salary, but – (laughter) – then I think I would place Iraq within the regional context, which I think the current secretary general is trying to do, but is constrained by many political impediments. And I think I would try to foster dialogue between the regional leaders and the main international ones, including obviously, the U.S. and in particular, on the issue of – on how the issue of Palestine and Iraq are sort of

crossing themselves. And, yes, I think I would start there definitely and try to involve the Arab League at a much more higher level than it has until now.

To respond to your first question, which was are these question ever – have they ever been put on the table, as far as we know, the Arab League has only been contacted by the United States government on this issue for one reason, to know if Arab states wanted to contribute financially to respond to this crisis and how much they wanted to. And Arab states, for many reasons, said that they didn't want to contribute financially to this, except for the UAE that has contributed \$10 million for UNHCR's budget in Syria, but that's it. There hasn't been any attempt really to involve them in terms of a regional comprehensive plan to respond to the needs of the refugees, in terms of a regional comprehensive plan to deal with the political underlying issues that have resulted from the Iraqi conflict.

MS. RUDMAN: Thank you. I think we can now open it up to our audience, so anyone who's interested, and if you can just, as we've done all day, identify yourself and your organization. Go over here first.

Q: Thank you. Kathleen Newland from the Migration Policy Institute and I wanted to come back to the question of the role of the Arab League, as Kristele was discussing it, and I had some conversations with a gentleman who is the special envoy for the Arab League in Baghdad for a couple of years, who said that the entire time that he was there, he never had a communication from the Arab League. He never had any response from any member government from the Arab League to his entreaties for directions or for instructions, and that there was an absolute stonewall on any kind of engagement. So it wasn't that they weren't been consulted by the multinational force and so on, but that they really didn't want to know. And so I think some perspective is necessary there.

And I think that points to a larger problem, which I think our colleague from the European Commission could perhaps shed some light on as well, which, as Julia, last night put it, the “you broke it, you own it” syndrome that every other country in the world regards this as a U.S. problem. Not that they don't recognize that it creates problems for them too – I think that is well recognized – but the willingness to initiate action to take major financial responsibility to resettle people, even for most countries to accept asylum applications from Iraqis, that willingness is very, very limited by this sort of elephant in the room, which is this is your problem; you resolve it. So if Kristele could maybe comment on the Arab League and other panelists, if they would like comment on the elephant in the room. Thanks.

MS. YOUNES: I think you're right. I think until very recently and even now, there's a reluctance to really get involved with anything that has to do with Iraq because there's a sense that it's just not their problem. It's not even a sense. Government officials from all the countries I've visited in the Middle East have said very clearly, “It's not our problem; we didn't break it. We were never asked our opinion when the U.S. came into Iraq, and now we have to clean it up. There's no way.”

And I think in general, that that has been the reaction throughout the world. The Europeans seem to think the same thing, even the British, which is interesting. (Laughs.) But from the Arab League side, I think there's a change now and I think part of the change is because they can no longer deny the consequences this is having on their member states. Part of it is humanitarian in terms of systems, but another part is purely and simply a sectarian problem for them now.

When I was in Egypt, I met with the representative from the ministry of foreign affairs who basically told us very clearly that it was a big problem for Egypt that Sunnis were leaving Iraq. It was a big problem. It's not that they didn't want them inside Egypt. That's not really why they closed their borders. It's that they don't want Sunnis leaving Iraq and leaving it to Shi'as. Similarly in Jordan, that's an issue as well. In Lebanon, the sectarian tensions are such that having a majority of Shi'a Iraqis coming into Lebanon is not necessarily the greatest thing happening, according to the Lebanese government today.

So I think the strain on systems, combined to the sectarian imbalances that are being created right now, and the fear of having Iran take over in Iraq, has sort of shifted a little bit the way the Arabs are thinking right now. And there seems to be much more willingness to engage on this issue.

Now, when we were in Cairo, Amr Moussa and his chief of staff were telling us that they wanted to establish a trust fund, which basically Arab countries would be able to contribute to, but also international actors, and they then would be able to channel bilateral assistance to the region, including to Syria, as they would act as an honest broker between the international community and the Syrian government. The UN has done this to Syria. They have channeled money, including money coming from the U.S. government, and that hasn't violated U.S. laws. So that would be one way to go about it. They seemed willing to do that.

MS. RUDMAN: The gentlemen on the aisle right here, half way up here.

Q: Nathaniel Hurd, International Rescue Committee. John, I want to pick on several things that you mentioned during your presentation. You talked about the displacement, particularly from a humanitarian perspective, and then about the possible implications it would have for U.S. troops and their safety and security as well. And several questions, one, to what extent do you think there's an appetite from the secretary, as well as generals on the ground, to more openly and publicly talking about the humanitarian situation from a humanitarian perspective, but then also what it might mean for U.S. troops if it's not properly responded to.

And the second question is, I'm curious about how displacement particularly is figuring into the kinds of information and trends that the department is tracking and where displacement is figuring into the response and the plans from the Defense Department in terms of what's happening on the ground. Thanks.

MR. MERRILL: Well, I mentioned General Petraeus' letter to Prime Minister Maliki in March. It's an anecdote, but it reflects the fact that we are looking, and have for quite some time looked at, both the humanitarian and security problems that can evolve or worsen as a consequence of this crisis. U.S. forces have an awful lot of experience delivering humanitarian assistance in an awful lot of places. And we could play a bigger role doing that in Iraq, but we would do so at the expense of something else.

So the question that we're concerned about principally is, looking at the situation today, what does one plan for realistically and what does one do to avoid the most negative potential outcomes? And that requires us, in the first instance, to understand the problem and the understanding is complicated by the fact that it is very often politicized. When I – with all apologies to the Iraqi embassy – when I hear a statement from the ministry of immigration, I'm not sure how to take it. Is it public relations? Is it simply reporting reality and so forth? And so when we don't know particularly in which direction the flow is moving, and will be moving or why, then that complicates the response. If people are freely returning, great; if they're returning under duress and they don't have a place to go, that suggests other things are needed.

Housing will probably be a very big problem and so forth. But creating these plans in an integrated fashion is problematic in the first instance because we're starting so late. If you asked somebody in 2003 in the Defense Department what our plan was for dealing with a huge surge of refugees, the answers would be, "Well, we don't have one. We don't have a huge surge. We don't have a plan because we don't have the responsibility. But – by the way, if this really goes south, we'll get the responsibility."

And we forgot at that point, what we always need to remember is that wars never go as planned, especially as planned by the arriving party. It just doesn't work that way. And this is one of those cases in which students of history trump students of politics because it simply never turns out the way we expect it will. And so planning for the downside has to be more serious and has to occur earlier. We're trying to play catch-up now. I don't know how effective that will be.

MS. RUDMAN: Actually, I'm sorry, there are a bunch of other people's questions, so we really need to move on. Suzi, right behind you on the same side there, this one.

Q: Hi. Is this on? This is – I'm Olga Olikier from the RAND Corporation. A couple of things, one – two of them kind of on the IDP issue and one on all of it. On the question of – one of the things I keep hearing, when I talk to people about IDPs in Iraq, is a certain helplessness, and part of that helplessness is the security situation, the question of access. How do you help these people when you can't get at them? What can we do? We're trapped in the green zone. We're trapped in the international zone, which are, of course, the same thing.

And one of the effects of this is that the people whom we end up trusting to do this, because we're not comfortable trusting local NGOs, we being the international community, because we recognize that we give some money to the Iraqi Red Cross and

they have some money of their own, but we're not completely comfortable letting them do it themselves. The military ends up doing it, actually without guidance or without being told to do it, but because they are there and they respond and they don't have the appropriate guidance to respond. I think that's something that's really been lacking in the community, sort of thinking about, first, are there better ways of channeling these efforts through civilians? And if we really are unwilling to channel through the civilians available to us who are Iraqis, what are we going to tell the armed forces to do and not to do?

Second point, also on IDPs, is the question of planning. Actually, if you'd asked them in 2003, they would have told you, "We do have a plan." We had a ton of plans precisely for massive displacement in the prewar period because that's what we thought was going to happen. It didn't. And I've been asking people if anyone's dug up the old plans to see how much of it is still relevant because we were talking about food shortages, water shortages, mass movements of populations, disease. None of that is what happened, so we were unprepared for what it was –

MS. RUDMAN: (Unintelligible) – people's questions, so let's –

Q: Sorry. Final question, the issue was raised of what to do if – when the U.S. withdraws – I would submit it's not just a question of withdrawal. It's a question of draw down. And the U.S. is going to draw down and that is going to have an impact on displacement. And we need to be planning for that, including how to help the people who helped us and what to do about the rest of the population.

MS. RUDMAN: Beth, do you want to take that, and then, John, do you have a follow-up?

MS. FERRIS: Yes, I think in terms of the helplessness, that is true. There is that feeling. But I think much more could be done with the Iraqi local NGOs. One of – and you look really hard for silver linings in times like these – but one of the good things is that Iraqi NGOs have done a great job by and large, have taken on more responsibility, have reached into communities, have taken tremendous risks, demonstrated a lot of commitment, and that working through them, I think, would certainly be good.

I think we need to be much more creative about the kind of assistance we give. Instead of moving toward temporary settlements, you give people money to buy – build another room on their house, so that you don't create this camp-like situations with all the problems that incurs. And certainly, there were a lot of plans in 2003 on the UN side, the NGO side at least, with plans to stockpile goods in the region and so forth, but I think the situation is fundamentally different than what we expected back in 2003. I'm not sure how useful those plans would be now.

MS. RUDMAN: Thanks. I saw some hands up in the back, the gentleman with the green tie on.

Q: Hi, my name is Jordan Day and I'm with the World Food Program. Number one, thank you to the three panelists. I thought that was an outstanding set of presentations. Just a quick point of information. We have been, for the last two or three months, working on a humanitarian response plan for Iraq and we're going to announce – sometime, I hope, in the next two or three weeks – food assistance for three-quarters of a million of displaced Iraqis, those who are outside the PDS. So that's issue number one.

Issue number two is, I think Mara's question was fantastic, which is, is this being discussed – the humanitarian response from the USG – is it being discussed at the deputies' level and within USG or the principals' level, and we would certainly welcome that. Thank you.

MR. MERRILL: Since that's come up twice, let me just comment on it. I'm not trying to be cute. The answer is yes, and I can't talk about it.

MS. RUDMAN: Okay, it's still encouraging though. I think there's another question – right, two folks in there.

Q: (Unintelligible) – from the European Commission. I wanted to make one comment on the elephant in the room. I do not exclude at all that there are some people in Europe who really see the – they see things that you indicate. Nevertheless, honestly, I think this is not EU policy and it is not a realistic assessment because you have to see what our interest today, as Europe. There can be no doubt there was a peace agreement on the way this all came about, but today – where we are today, it is very clear that from a European perspective, we have a huge interest in getting involved and in taking up this challenge.

And let me also say the second point, and that is to say that on the European side, obviously, this is also a process. You have been pointing very much throughout the day to the fact that the U.S., and that is what I take away from here, really only most recently has come to recognize fully the size of the challenge. And obviously, on the other side of the Atlantic, it's the same. It's the same. It's a process underway. I think there is very clearly the recognition that we need to do more in Europe.

And the last point I want to make is I take also away from this event today that there is very clearly a big potential for further dialogue between the U.S. and Europe on precisely these matters because so far, there is rather limited dialogue, and as the situation evolves and we all try to take up the challenge, I clearly think we should do more on both sides of the Atlantic to exchange experiences and to see how we can take the matters forward. Thanks.

MS. RUDMAN: Kristele?

MS. YOUNES: Yes, so we can expect your contribution to the UN appeals any day now, or is this something that's being discussed at the European Commission level?

Q: No, quite honestly, I have to say I'm not aware of the matter to which you refer precisely. I'm willing to look into this and I will come back to you, I promise you. And I – let's exchange our contact details afterwards.

MS. YOUNES: Thank you.

MS. RUDMAN: Excellent, that's just the kind of forward movement that we like to see come out of our panels. We're about acting, not just talking here. So that's great. Do we have any more questions? I think we time – perfect – for one more question and then we'll go to Anita for the closing.

Q: Kelly (Deutsche?) from (Graphic TV?). Kristele, what was really nice about what you try to do is provide some insight, not only on what the neighboring countries are thinking, but why they think the way they do. My question is, what are the thoughts regarding how the American public views the humanitarian crisis? And I know awareness levels are low, but if there's any insight on how they view it, and if there is a view that the responsibility does or does not lie with the American people, or if it lies with the American government.

MS. YOUNES: I think the one major positive point on dictatorships is that people realize that governments and populations are two very different things and that they don't always think alike. And so there is, in general, in the Middle East a tendency to dissociate the American people from the American leadership. So the thought, I believe, is that the American leadership does not care much about what's going on right now in the region and the regional effects of the war.

But in general, I think the people in the Middle East have a fairly positive opinion of Americans and of their generosity. They also have a fairly negative opinion as to the degree of information that Americans get about what happens in the Middle East. So I think in general, there is a sense that most Americans – there's a belief that most Americans do not really know what's going on, and the magnitude of this crisis, which explains the lack of reaction, but they are definitely – the resentment felt towards the U.S. government is definitely not associated with a resentment towards the American people.

MS. RUDMAN: Thank you, and I think that we are, at this point, wrapping up this panel and before Anita comes up to wrap up the conference at large, I just want thank each and everyone of you. I think we can tell from the audience questions how much everyone appreciated what you had to say and offer, and I just want to second what we've already heard from the audience. I thought it was terrific. Then certainly, the work that each of you does is as well, but I thought what you were able to offer us today was that much more, so it's great to have the ability to have that kind of public exchange on it. So thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. SHARMA: I don't have too much to add in terms of substance to the debate or the discussion. I think it's been a testament to how much people care about the subject

that you were able to stay all day and again, come after the first snowstorm of the season. I will say, though, that we will continue this discussion beyond the room. It's commonplace to have a great conference. Everyone exchanges cards, and then nothing happens after that.

My goal is that we are able to take some recommendations and put forward the document that you may all find useful in the coming weeks and months, as you start to think through your own processes for helping to move this agenda forward. And I will take the suggestion for the European-American dialogue to continue and hopefully, press upon the Heinrich Boell Foundation to do a similar conference in Berlin sometime soon. We'll have to check on resources for that.

But before we close, I just want to again express my sincere thanks to the Center for American Progress, to the Heinrich Boell Foundation, Adam Hunter, who has left to take a job from – left Boell Foundation to take a job at the Department of Homeland Security. He was my partner, on the other side, putting this together – (unintelligible) –

MS. : (Off mike.)

MS. SHARMA: Adam is going to – he's specifically going to help with the logjam for that – no, I wish that – (laughs) –he would be able to do that. Well, we will be asking him. Marlene Cooper Vasilic, Suzi Emmerling, Winny Chen, and Mara, obviously, Larry and Brian Katulis, and especially John Podesta. We're in a unique position here that we were able to work with the Heinrich Boell Foundation so closely.

And I just am really appreciative for – appreciative of the fact that we were able to put this conference together. Like I said, check back to our website soon and we'll be in touch. But again, thank you very much for coming and thank you to our panelists, both the second panelists, the lunch panelists, and our panelists in the morning. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(END)