Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for

convening this important hearing. Thank you to the witnesses for

your testimony.

I have two questions, one for Ambassador Ford. Secretary Kerry

has said that the policy of the United States is to change Assad’s

calculations so that he will cease the killing, and agree to some negotiations,

and some cease fire. And I’d like your assessment as to

whether or not there’s any evidence that Assad has begun to

change his calculation in that direction, and whether or not there

is a set of individuals that the Opposition might be prepared to negotiate

with, and whether the Geneva Framework makes any

sense, or is still something that has some prospect for resolution?

And the second area, I also want to thank Ms. Lindborg for the

work you and your agency are doing, as Ranking Member Deutch

referred to. I really hope that people understand the value of it,

and thank you for your testimony.

I am particularly interested if you would share with us some of

the work that’s being done to protect Syrian women and girls.

There have been reports both from a recent U.N. report, and the

general media about the really devastating consequences of this

conflict on women and the rape of Syrian women who are fleeing

Syria to host countries where they’re not finding any better conditions,

and incidences of rape, forced marriage, and child marriages

and the like. If you could share with us some of the work that’s

being done to protect Syrian girls and women, I’d be grateful. Ambassador

Ford, we could start with you.