

**Telebriefing:**  
***SYRIA: A ROLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS FUNDERS?***  
**March 21, 2013**

**BIOGRAPHIES OF SPEAKERS**



Dr. Kodmani is a political scientist by training and a professor of International Relations at Paris University. She holds a PhD from Sciences Po Paris. Her main scholarly experience is the analysis of Arab societies, the strategic relations of the Middle East and regional conflicts as well as the Palestinian question. She has vast experience in policy analysis and policy advice through her time working in key international organizations, first within the French Institute of International Relations and later with the Collège de France, the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Centre d'Etudes et de Relations Internationales. She spent seven years in Cairo as head of the Governance and International Cooperation program of the Ford Foundation Middle East office from where her main activity was to support Arab research centres and civil society organizations. In 2005, she established the Arab Reform Initiative, a consortium of Arab policy research institutes on reform and democratic transition in the Arab world. In August 2011, Bassma Kodmani participated in the founding of the Syrian National Council and became a member of the Executive Bureau and Head of the Foreign Relations Bureau. She resigned from the Council in August 2012.



**Anne-Sophie Schaeffer, Program Director, Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Support of Human Rights Defenders**

Anne-Sophie Schaeffer is Program Director of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF), a regional foundation registered in Denmark and operating in Tunisia, which supports human rights defenders and NGOs in the Arab region. Educated as a lawyer, she specialized in international law and human rights. In 2004, she helped establish the Foundation in Denmark and has since led its Secretariat. Previously, she worked for the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and she conducted research for the French section of Amnesty International on Women and Religion within the framework of a global campaign to stop violence against women. Anne-Sophie travels regularly to the region and studied Arabic in Palestine, Morocco and Tunisia.



**Sussan Tahmasebi, Co-Founder and MENA Program Director, International Civil Society Action Network;**

Sussan Tahmasebi is the co-founder of the International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN), an international NGO dedicated to supporting women's civil society activism on rights, peace and security in conflict affected or transitioning countries. Currently based in the United States, Sussan serves as the Director of ICAN's MENA region program, which seeks to inform the international policy community on the status of women in the region through the publication of relevant and timely issue briefs, titled "What the Women Say," which highlight the most pressing issues facing women in the countries of the region. ICAN also seeks to create a community of practice network in the region where women's rights advocates can share experiences and expertise, stand in solidarity with one another and provide support and work toward making their demands for equality an indigenous demand to the region. Prior to taking on this role, Sussan worked in Iran as a women's rights activist and civil society activist to promote women's rights and strengthen civil society for over ten years. Sussan is a founding member of the One Million Signatures Campaign, a grassroots effort which promotes broad awareness on women's rights and collects signatures of Iranians who support an end to gender-biased laws. She has played an important role in strengthening the capacity of Iranian civil society to effect positive change, by co-founding the Iran Civil Society Training and Research Center, which was shut down by security forces in March 2007. She also worked in the United States to improve access to reproductive and maternal and child health services for underserved communities, in particular communities of color and refugee and immigrant communities. She has published articles on the status of Iranian civil society, the Iranian women's movement and the situation of women in the MENA region. In 2010 and 2011, Sussan was honored by Human Rights Watch with the Alison Des Forges Award for extraordinary activism, HRW's highest honor. In 2011 she was named by *Newsweek* as one of 150 women who Shake the World.