Announcements: Syrian Studies Association Annual Meeting: Saturday, November 22

The Syrian Studies Association will hold its annual business meeting on November 22, 2014, at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Executive Board Meeting, 1-2pm: Park Tower, Suite 8224 (L)

Business Meeting (open to all SSA members), 2:30-3:30pm: Virginia B (L)

Panel Discussion: New Perspectives on the Syrian Conflict (open to the public): 3:30-5pm, Virginia B (L),

Abstract: In Syria, we have seen persistent violations of international humanitarian law. The targeting of health workers and medical infrastructure are a hallmark of the Syrian conflict. When hospitals are destroyed and medical workers are killed, more is lost than buildings and individual lives: whole communities suffer.

Salam Al Kuntar (Visiting Scholar, University of Pennsylvania): Syrian Cultural Heritage at Risk: Current Observation and Protection Efforts
Abstract: In Syria, cultural heritage is part of everyday life. It creates shared bonds to a common past, standing as a tangible reminder of the millennia of experience that have shaped the Syrian national identity. The destruction of Syrian heritage therefore presents immediate preservation and social concerns, elevating the need to address the protection of the country’s cultural fabric. This talk addresses the protection efforts of the Penn Cultural Heritage Center's project, Safeguarding the Heritage of Syria and Iraq (SHOSI), in documenting the ongoing damage to cultural heritage and developing specific interventions that empower Syrians to protect and preserve their own heritage.

Harout Ekmanian (Journalist, Civilitas Foundation): Challenges of the Armenian Community in Syria During the Syrian Uprising
Abstract: This talk analyzes the political, social and cultural development of the Syrian Armenian community under Baath party rule (from 1963 until present), its transformation during the presidency of Bashar Assad since 2000, and its dilemma during the present Syrian conflict. Within a complex web of decades-old alliances among sects, clans, businesses and a security apparatus in Syria, Armenians have forged both as a community and as individuals relations with the regime through its army, security agencies, and influential Baath party officials. Did these networks help or fail the Armenian community during the Syrian Uprising? Were the representatives of the regime honest partners or they were exploiters? How will the Armenian community survive, transform, or cease to exist after the collapse of or change in the Syrian political system?

Sharon Smith (Aga Khan Documentation Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology): TBA.

Special thanks go to SSA President Keith Watenpaugh for organizing this year’s special panel.

Stacy D. Fahrenthold is a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in History at Williams College.