Ali Al-Ahmed is a Saudi scholar and expert on Saudi political affairs, including: terrorism, Islamic movements, Wahhabi Islam, Saudi political history, Saudi-American relations, and the history of the al-Saud family. He is the founder and director of the Institute for Gulf Affairs, an independent think tank in Washington, D.C. As a journalist, al-Ahmed exposed major news stories such as The Pentagon’s botched translation of the 9-11 Bin Laden tape in December 2001. He also discovered the video of Daniel Pearl’s murder. He has testified before Congress on several occasions on the issue of civil rights and religious freedom in the Middle East.

Laith Al-Majali is first and foremost a visual storyteller. Born and raised in Amman, Jordan with a communications degree from Elon University, Majali has produced for American and Middle East television, and has won awards for editing/producing a number of short films and documentaries. Producer and editor of “Captain Abu Raed,” the 2008 Sundance Audience Award winning film and winner of 27 other international festival awards, Majali has also become a driving force within the Arab world’s emerging new photographic movement.

Igal Bursztyn is an Israeli filmmaker who also holds the position of Full Professor Adjunct in Tel Aviv University’s Faculty of Arts. Having directed dozens of full-length motion pictures, short films and documentaries, Professor Bursztyn is known as one of Israel’s foremost filmmakers. His books on film include Film, Language and Civil Wars of Culture (1996), Documentation Documentary, Fiction (2005) and Intimate Gazes (2009). His films include several documentaries including Displaced Persons (1979), and Leibovitz in Maalot (1979). He is currently a visiting professor at the University of Tennessee.

J. Alan Liotta was named Principal Director for the Office of Detainee Affairs in July 2004 after the Office was created in response to the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. Since January 2009, he has served as the Department’s principal official for developing and coordinating policies regarding detainees. To ensure only the most dangerous individuals are held at Guantanamo Bay Detention Center, he has negotiated successfully with numerous countries to enable the transfer of more than 300 GTMO detainees back to their countries of nationality. In October 2009, President Obama awarded him the Distinguished Executive Presidential Rank.

R. Casey Olson is an Executive Vice President of Occidental Petroleum Corporation. He previously held the position of President, Oxy Oil and Gas – International with responsibility for the management of all Oxy international oil and gas operations and international business development efforts. Occidental Petroleum Corporation is the fourth largest U.S. oil & gas company, based on market equity capitalization, with operations in the United States, Middle East/North Africa and Latin America. In the United Arab Emirates, Mr. Olson is a member of the Board of Directors of Dolphin Energy Limited. He also serves as Vice Chairman of the U.S./United Arab Emirates Business Council.

Jen’nan Ghazal Read is an associate professor of sociology at Duke University and is heading up the Duke Global Health Institute’s new interdisciplinary postdoctoral fellows program. Her research focuses on gender and ethnicity, the sociology of religion and health, and the assimilation experiences of Arab Americans and U.S. Muslims. As a Carnegie Scholar from 2006-2008, an honor limited to twenty scholars each year, Read has recently studied the political integration of U.S. Muslims. Read is author of Culture, Class and Work Among Arab-American Women (LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2004) and has published numerous other scholarly works.

Matt Silver is the Head of the General Studies Department for the Emek Jezreel College in Israel. His focus is on American Jewish history, trends in modern Jewish thought and Israeli history. Among others, he has taught courses on the media and the Middle East, the Holocaust and its impact on modern Jewish thought and comparative religious history between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He has served on the editorial board of Ha’aretz in Israel and was a visiting professor at Central Connecticut State University. He is currently a visiting professor at the Ohio State University.

Mohammad Ali Kadivar is a current PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A native of Iran, he holds master’s and bachelor’s degrees in Political Sciences from Tehran University in Tehran, Iran. He has taught at Sharif University of Technology and the Cultural Community of the University of Tehran in Iran, as well as at Florida International University. He has published numerous recent articles in Farsi and English on theories of transition to democracy, and presented his research at conferences in the United States and Iran.

I.M.O.M. (Intermediate Masters of Meditation) is a project by Sandy Blocker and Jason “Guhl” Lentz that blends their decades of international music study and experience together at a crossroads of culture, emotion, and devotion. Featuring principally the Oud, a middle-eastern short-neck lute, and a blend of Cuban Conga, North African bendir, and West African Jembe percussion instruments, the music of I.M.O.M. honors traditions from Outer Mongolia all the way to the backwoods of the Appalachians. One will hear Sanskrit prayers sung to Arabic Maqams accompanied by Latin Percussion, enveloped in spontaneous improvisation that is both meditative and ecstatic.

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Patricia K. Kabra currently serves as the Deputy Director responsible for public diplomacy initiatives and programs in the Middle East and North Africa for the Department of State. Previously, she has served as Public Affairs Officer in Tunis, Tunisia; Doha, Qatar; Jerusalem, Israel and Damascus, Syria. As Public Affairs Officer, she was responsible for directing the Public Affairs sections and all diplomacy programs and press activities. Patricia has a PhD from UCLA in Middle Eastern History and an MA from Penn State in Middle Eastern History.

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