

# Alicia Kearns

Programme Lead



## SUMMARY

A senior, experienced counter violent extremism, community cohesion and stabilisation specialist with significant practical and programmatic experience of driving behavioural change to support and protect communities. As **Cross-Government Lead for Syria, Iraq and Counter-Daesh Communications** at the UK FCO (2014-16), she was responsible for communications on Syria in Lebanon and across the MENA region, and advised the Global Coalition Against Daesh ('The Coalition'). She has also led CVE projects more widely across the region, including developing the strategy behind the largest CVE network in the world – Families Against Terrorism and Extremism (FATE) - which empowered mothers and families to drive young people away from violent extremism and towards positive, alternative pathways. Also oversaw **@UKAgainstDaesh** Twitter channel, taking it from 104th to 2nd most influential FCO Twitter account. Alicia also brings significant expertise in building the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs), governments and international organisations to deliver effective CVE interventions, including 65 (now 75) members of The Coalition, and as an advisor to the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network, providing training to over 60 CVE organisations and governments. Recognised expert in designing conflict sensitive programmes, and will lead our Peace and Conflict Analysis and ongoing conflict monitoring work.

Specialises in **countering violent extremism** and **disinformation** efforts, **community cohesion** and **stabilisation, public and digital diplomacy**. Designing and driving award winning and hard hitting campaigns, Alicia's work has enabled people to understand complex social issues, turn away from harmful behaviours and commit to social action.

## EXPERIENCE

2017 – Present

### Independent Consultant

Providing strategic communications, counter violent extremism, counter disinformation, public and digital diplomacy, and crisis consultancy to governments, NGOs and international bodies.

2016 - 2017

### Director, Global Influence

Deputy Head of Agency, overseeing counter terrorism / violent extremism, counter organised crime and counter disinformation interventions to build resilience in, and support to, vulnerable communities. Focused on the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Europe and North Africa. Oversaw all new business and secured agency place on UK and US government Communications roster.

2016

### Volunteer Emergency Response Team Leader, Lighthouse Relief

Managed Emergency Response Teams of 40 volunteers supporting refugees to land safely on Lesbos, Greece providing relief; food, water, medical care and dry clothes. Building friendships with, and providing support to, unaccompanied minors on Lesbos.

## SKILLS

- ▶ Senior CVE, community cohesion and stabilisation specialist
- ▶ Experienced working in sensitive environments, including fragile and conflict-affected states
- ▶ Proven record of managing complex programmes and large project teams
- ▶ Significant experience of delivering CVE capacity building and capability development to CSOs, governments and international organisations

## QUALIFICATIONS

### MA Cantab in Social and Political Sciences

1998 – 2002

University of Cambridge (Fitzwilliam)

### Speaker Events

- ▶ EU Radicalisation Awareness Network:
  - ▶ Countering Violent Extremism by supporting civil society
  - ▶ Effective Prevention of Radicalisation – measuring impact
- ▶ Refugee Action, St. Andrews' University: Swim to Safety - the Syria crisis & supporting refugees
- ▶ Oxford University Digital Diplomacy Research Group: The Verbal Prophecy
- ▶ US Government Public Diplomacy Commission: Countering Violent Extremism and Disinformation through Public Diplomacy
- ▶ Lund University, Sweden: Own the Truth and Industrialise It – countering terror and disinformation
- ▶ Oxford University Digital Diplomacy Research Group: Digital Diplomacy - merely a vanity mirror?
- ▶ Ukraine Government Communications Service: Proactive Management of Crises & Disinformation Attacks

**Cross-Government lead for Syria and Iraq Communications, and Senior Advisor for Counter Daesh Communications, Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

2014 - 2016

Devised Prime Minister-approved communications strategy to defeat Daesh and support Syria. Led communications at UN-led Syria Peace Talks and supported Moderate Opposition. Led UK Government strategic communications/PR response to Russian military activity in Syria. Represented the UK Government at one-to-one meetings with Foreign Ministers, the most senior religious leaders of countries, NGOs, and foreign militaries for 15 countries. Member of Rapid Deployment Unit, assisting with crisis response to Sousse and Greece. Managed a team devising and delivering overt and discreet communications campaigns in the UK and Middle East. Also oversaw @UKAgainstDaesh twitter channel, taking it from 104th to 2nd most influential FCO Twitter account. Three bonuses for 'exceptional' delivery and nominated for exceptional policy delivery award. Security Awareness in Fragile Environments plus (SAFE+) training, including additional Hostile Environment Awareness Day course. Also Rapid Deployment trained for managing crises including evacuations.

2013 - 2014

**Senior Press Officer, Ministry of Defence**

Press Secretary for Defence Secretary at NATO Summit in Wales. Press Secretary to the Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology. Led MoD's significant contribution to the Scottish Referendum campaign – Alicia's campaign secured the greatest impact of all Government output on the campaign. Launched the Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carrier. Managed four Press Officers whose portfolios included: Defence equipment (F-35 combat jets, submarines & unmanned air systems etc); Defence strategy (SDSR 2015); Nuclear capabilities and Science and Technology (DSTL); Operational inquests; and Defence exports and government to government sales.

2010 - 2012

**Consultant Account Manager, Grayling Communications**

Managed the Press Office for Stockport NHS Foundation Trust acting as spokesperson for three months to manage their reputation during a period in which saline murders were taking place. Drove the NHS Specialised Services Press Office for the review on the future of children's congenital heart services. Secured highest ever response to a NHS consultation. Worked on a range of further clients including Lloydspharmacy (delivering highest ever increase in product sales from media activity), and Crime Reduction Initiatives. Led the Health New Business Group (sitting across all nine UK offices) seeking out new opportunities for the Agency. Hand-picked by the Board to lead Grayling UK's own PR from January 2012. Award for outstanding delivery.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- ▶ Selected for the cross-Government communications future leaders programme (2014/16)
- ▶ Three bonuses for exceptional performance, FCO (2015/16)
- ▶ Nominated for Policy Delivery award – outstanding digital diplomacy (2016)
- ▶ Ministry of Justice Rewards and Recognition Scheme (2013)
- ▶ Put forward for CIPR Young PR Professional of the Year award by Grayling (2011)
- ▶ Named 'Best Hire' in PR Week's top 25 Public Sector Consultancies (2011)
- ▶ CEO's Award, Grayling (2012)
- ▶ Portrait in the National Portrait Gallery under the designation 'Exceptional Youth' (2006)
- ▶ Photographed by Sir David Bailey for the Guardian's feature on '16 Young People To Watch' (2003)
- ▶ Princess Diana Award for contribution to 'Global Citizenship' (2003)

# Jasmine El-Gamal

In-Country Project Lead



## SUMMARY

Jasmine El-Gamal brings over 12 years' experience in the field of national security as previous Country Director for Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria for the US Department of Defense, Acting Chief of Staff for the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Middle East Policy, and as a translator and cultural advisor in Iraq during the initial stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Living in Beirut, she serves as a Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council – where she appears regularly in print and television media to provide expert commentary and analysis on US foreign policy, extremist groups and the process of radicalisation – and as a Principal Consultant at Quantum Communications, our content partner. She has significant experience of handling crisis and conflict: as Special Assistant to three consecutive US Under Secretaries of Defense she provided strategic advice on a wide range of national security issues, including local and international conflict and sectarian dynamics across the Middle East.

## EXPERIENCE

### *US Department of Defense*

Served as a Middle East Advisor under four consecutive Secretaries of Defence, whom she regularly briefed on issues related to the region, as well as accompanied on official trips to the Middle East. .

### *US Department of Defense*

As the Special Assistant to three consecutive Under Secretaries of Defence, managed 700+ employees; and provided strategic advice on a wide range of national security issues.

### *U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy*

Co-authored U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy's 2015 Annual Report to Congress on U.S. Government public diplomacy activities; expertise in articulating and streamlining messaging and communications.

### *Atlantic Council*

Serves as a Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, where she appears regularly in print and television media to provide expert commentary and analysis on US foreign policy, extremist groups and the process of radicalisation.

## SKILLS

- ▶ Expert on National Security issues, local and international conflict and sectarian dynamics across the Middle East
- ▶ International commentator on extremism and radicalisation in print and television media
- ▶ Strong experience in strategic communications, cultural, gender- and conflict -sensitive programming

## QUALIFICATIONS

*Georgetown University, School of Foreign Service*

**Master of Science**

*Clarkson University*

**Bachelor of Science**

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- ▶ Speaks fluent English and Arabic

# Rebecca Emerson-Keeler

M&E Expert



## SUMMARY

As the former UK Head of Capability Building for CVE Strategic Communications at the UK-led Counter-Daesh Coalition ('The Coalition'), Rebecca is an experienced global practitioner, with over 15 years' experience managing and monitoring programmes, developing business and leading evaluations, representing organisations to governments, working on conflict and fragile states, human rights, strategic communication, P/CVE and capability building. Representing the UK Government, Arab Governments and UN agencies to International audiences, she has highly honed diplomatic and liaison skills and is a senior advisor to the government in the UK.

Particular efforts included: establishing a steering group on C-Daesh communications with the Government of Lebanon; driving CVE and resilience communications efforts with the Government of Jordan; delivering a comprehensive religious leaders' programme in Morocco and Tunisia; and a Tunisian resilience building/entrepreneurship scheme to address drivers of radicalisation. Working closely with the USG, Canada, France and many of the other Coalition countries, this was a key diplomatic role managing UK CSSF and CTPF funds of over £4 million.

Much of her experience has focused on conflict and displacement scenarios allowing contact with a wide range of geographical exposure despite having specialised on the Middle East and Africa. Her technical background includes civilian protection, displacement and human rights, and counter radicalisation, alongside a solid programme management and programme advisory background. She has provided expert advisory and training on mainstreaming gender, gender equality, SGBV/PSVI, media management, UNSCR 1325 and implementation of national action plans and specific advice and training for Arab League and the UK government in addition to wider evaluation work.

Prior to working as an international development consultant specialising in human rights, communications, displacement, justice and security, Rebecca worked as a research assistant for Tim Loughton, MP; a freelance journalist (Channel 4 News (UK), Telegraph (UK), Independent (UK) and Dehavilliand); Occupied Palestinian Territories researcher at the St Andrews University Centre for Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV); and the Technical Lead for Human Trafficking for the Oxford Refugee Centre forced migration until recently, leaving to take a board position with the INGO Urban Refugees in Paris. Rebecca also runs her own consultancy, Insaan, through which she recently completed a gender participation evaluation of DFID-funded security and justice programmes for Syria, and a number of UN agencies responding to the current EU migrant/refugee crisis.

## EXPERIENCE

2012 - Present

**Consultant and Director, Insaan Consulting**

Insaan provides support to governments, UN agencies and charities on fundraising, media management and programming. Recent work includes: human rights evaluation expertise to Konung International; gender participation evaluation of DFID-funded security and justice programmes for Syria; and a number of UN agencies responding to the current EU migrant/refugee crisis. Works with a range of commercial partners, including MZN, Minerva Associates and is a Senior Advisor for the UK Government Stabilisation Unit and deployee for Canadem.

2014 – 2016

**Head of Coalition Capacity Building, Global Coalition Communications Cell, Foreign & Commonwealth Office**

## SKILLS

- ▶ Results driven, with proven track record of delivering against objectives
- ▶ Proven project management skills
- ▶ Skilled communicator at all, including board, levels
- ▶ Experienced supplier manager
- ▶ Key team player, but equally capable of working alone and making autonomous decisions
- ▶ Broad industry experience across a wide variety of industry sector

## QUALIFICATIONS

*St Andrews University*  
**MA (Hon) Philosophy of Ethics and English Literature**

*BPP Law School, London*  
**Graduate Diploma in Law**

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Arabic - professional fluency standard

French – Intermediate standard

### In country experience

- ▶ Global with focus on MENA
- ▶ Europe and thematically on the Balkans, Asia, Americas and Africa

### Thematic expertise

- ▶ Gender, Conflict, CVE, MEL, Strategic Communications, Business Development, Human Rights, Commercial Engagement, Humanitarian, Stabilisation

Headed up a team supporting capacity building across the 65 disparate members (63 countries and two international organisations), overseeing capability building component for MENA working to develop clear entry points and a strategy to accelerate Coalition governments' and regional civil society's communications capacity to tackle Daesh's narrative. Working across government and with broader organisations, scoped needs across seven countries in MENA and Balkans, delivered advice directly and procured services. Particular efforts included: establishing a steering group on C-Daesh communications with the Government of Lebanon; driving CVE and resilience communications efforts with the Government of Jordan; delivering a comprehensive religious leaders' programme in Morocco and Tunisia; and a Tunisian resilience building/entrepreneurship scheme to address drivers of radicalisation. Working closely with the USG, Canada, France and many of the other Coalition countries, this was a key diplomatic role managing UK CSSF and CTPF funds of over £4 million.

**2013 - 2015** **Freedom of Expression Advisor & Head of Programmes, BBC Media Action**

Management of a £3m programme on human rights in a media context for USDRL, EU Devco and FCO APPF. Donor liaison, administration, team training and compliance. Strategic support to legal reform and media governance reform in the Iraqi MOI and other bodies. Capability building of Ministry of Interior Iraqi delegation to London for Countering Violent Extremism and communications mentoring through key UK government stakeholders on communications. Organising training of judiciary, evaluating implementing partners' programmes (including for Institute of War and Peace Reporting). Supporting BBC editorial development on mainstreaming gender, developing SGBV and child protection guidelines, strategic communications in conflict and tools to monitor protection compliance and Do No Harm.

**2012** **Gender Consultant and Trainer, Democratic Progress Institute, Iraq**

Providing support to facilitation of cross-community lectures on gender mainstreaming, civil society and how local NGOs can best meet reporting and monitoring and evaluation demands of international donors (establishing methodologies, assisting on log frames and indicators, programme cycle planning and reporting).

**2011** **Governance & Protection Advisor, DFID Libya**

Consultant on the stabilisation programme team planning for Libya crisis in areas of governance and protection. Development of programme against policy and liaison with potential implementers. Development of stabilisation M&E frameworks to support wider team.

**2010** **Programme Coordinator – Counter Trafficking, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Syria**

Coordinating projects under EU crime and justice funds and US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migrants' border security and counter-trafficking funds. Managing two shelters in Damascus and Aleppo, capacity-building NGO staff and working with police, judiciary, prisons and local authorities to ensure protection and sustainability for the victims of trafficking. Coordination with UN organisations, donors and with the Syrian government to put in place a plan of action for rolling out legislation on counter trafficking and capacity building of border control officers, lawyers and police through training and awareness raising. Managing a budget of \$1.5 million in country.

# Alexander Johnson

Regional Manager – Levant, Turkey & Iraq



## SUMMARY

A senior security and investigations professional with 16 years' practical investigative experience, including 10 years with a UK government CT department and a further five years with Control Risks, a leading global strategic risk company, where he most recently served as Director of Investigations and Strategic Risk for India and South Asia. Based in Amman, Alex now serves as Regional Manager at Torchlight, delivering capacity building, mentoring and training to enable the transformation of investigative organisations across the Middle East and North Africa.

He has extensive experience of scoping, designing and implementing institutional change through sustainable mentoring and training programmes that have human rights assurance and safeguards at their core. He speaks fluent Arabic, French and Spanish, holds a bachelor's degree in Middle East History & Politics from Durham University in the UK, and has also studied Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Comparative Religion and Religious Extremism at academic institutions in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria.

## EXPERIENCE

2016 – Present

**Regional Manager - Levant, Turkey & Iraq –  
TorchlightGroup Limited**

Lead the design and delivery of mentoring and training programmes to develop sustainable, human rights compliant capabilities in support of CT and criminal justice investigations. Funded by a range of international donors, these programmes include the use of human and open source intelligence, ethical interviewing and developing core investigative skills to improve the collection and presentation of evidence, reducing reliance on ocular and oral testimony. Alex also leads Torchlight's involvement in the development of initiatives to counter violent extremism and how these feed in to broader CT strategies.

2014 – 2016

**Director of Investigations & Strategic Risk, India & South  
Asia – Control Risks Group**

Head of strategic consulting, integrity risk and fraud and forensic investigations practice in India and South Asia. Responsible for management and training of multi-disciplinary team of 18 researchers and investigators split between offices in Delhi and Mumbai. Conducted investigations into allegations of white-collar crime, sexual harassment and wide scale corruption, using a combination of investigative and witness interviews, discreet enquiries, open source research and data analytics, on behalf of multinational corporations, financial institutions and international development banks.

2011 – 2014

**Senior Consultant, Integrity Risk, Libya, GCC, Iran &  
Pakistan – Control Risks Group**

Managed complex, multi-jurisdictional problem-solving, integrity risk and business intelligence projects in support of commercial operations across the MENA region, Iran and Indian subcontinent; managed the development and vetting of a diverse network of confidential contacts on the ground; led investigations into breaches of international sanctions, asset-tracing, white-collar crime, and IP theft, analysing and cross-verifying large volumes of data from multiple sources on behalf of multinational corporations and financial institutions against the backdrop of the Arab Spring and rapprochement with Iran.

## SKILLS

- ▶ Senior counter-terrorism (CT) and white-collar crime investigator
- ▶ 16 years' professional investigative experience in government & private sector
- ▶ Fluent in Arabic, French and Spanish
- ▶ Experienced working in sensitive environments, including fragile and conflict-affected states
- ▶ Proven record of managing and developing large teams of researchers and investigators
- ▶ Delivers training to governments on human rights compliant investigations and ethical interviewing

## QUALIFICATIONS

**BA in Arabic, Spanish & Middle  
Eastern History & Politics**

1998 – 2002

Durham University

**Arabic & Pre-Islamic Middle East  
History and Poetry**

1999 – 2000

Alexandria University, Egypt

**Islamic and Qur'anic Studies &  
Qur'anic Recitation**

2007 – 2008

Abu Nur Institute, Syria

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- ▶ SC Clearance

2005 - 2011

**Investigations & Operations – UK Government**

Coordinated investigations into broad range of threats to national security from domestic and international terrorist networks; validated information with law enforcement agencies; part of core team of investigators responsible for disruption of significant security threat to the UK; served as expert witness before Special Immigration Appeals Committee (SIAC); engaged senior government officials as part of Government Crisis Management Mechanism; delivered training in French and Arabic to foreign partners to develop human rights compliant methodologies to enable greater information sharing for cross-border investigations.

2007 - 2008

**Study Leave – Syria & Lebanon**

Between October 2007 and March 2008, completed a 6-month course in Islamic Studies, and Qur'anic Recitation (*Tajwid*) at the Abu Nur (Sheikh Ahmed Kufaro) Institute in Damascus. Between March and September 2008, completed a 6-month course in Qur'anic Studies and Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) at the Near East Institute of Theology, and a 6-month course in Comparative Religion and Religious Extremism at the Institut d'Etudes Islamo-Chrétiennes, as well as modules in Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at the American University of Beirut.

2003 - 2004

**Linguist – UK Government**

Conducted research in Arabic and provided interpreting during interviews in support of sensitive CT investigations.; interpreted on behalf of senior UK government investigators during meetings and training interventions with foreign partners, and supported the delivery of a 6-month investigative training and mentoring programme to a new liaison service; developed fluent command of Levantine, Egyptian, Iraqi, Gulf and Libyan Arabic dialects, and strong subject matter knowledge of key radicalising factors and drivers for violent extremism.