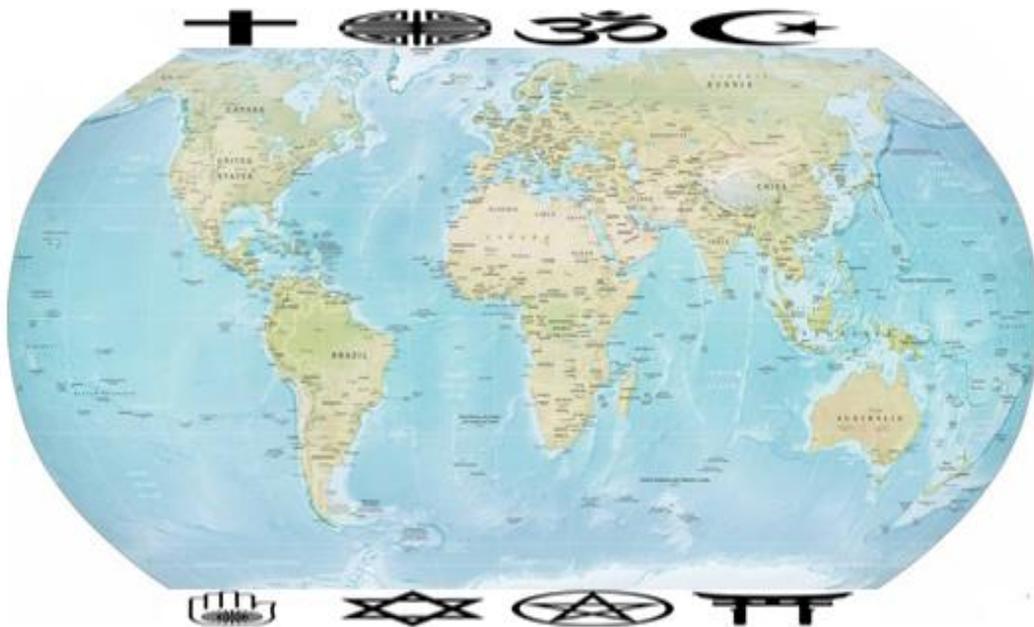


The Role of Religion in Combating Terrorism



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The Role of Religion **in Combating Terrorism**

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Professor Robert Eisen

The first question that I was asked to address and is on the flyer for this event, is whether religion is relevant for combating terrorism. I would say that the answer to this question is a clear 'yes.' There are many reasons for my saying this, but the first is that you have to understand what the problem is before you can solve it. And what is the problem? Well, when we speak about terrorism as a problem in the West, we are generally speaking about *religious* terrorism—more particularly, Islamic terrorism. I do not mean to imply that Islam is inherently violent, or that it has no peaceful side to it. In fact, I will argue in a few minutes that Islam does indeed have a peaceful dimension. Nor am I saying that other religions are immune to violence. They are not, and I include my own religion, Judaism, in this assessment as well. I am only clarifying that when Westerners express concerns about terrorism, they are generally speaking about terrorism of this kind. Now Islamic terrorism has many causes—political social, economic, historical—but religion is inextricably connected to all of these. Therefore, you have to have an understanding of Islam as a religion before you can even approach the problem of terrorism that Westerners are concerned with.

Now this recommendation may seem like a no-brainer, but I have found, surprisingly, that the whole issue of religion is often missing or downplayed when academics discuss international conflict, or people in government do. Religion is not taken all that seriously. It is not seen as a subject deserving study in its own right. Generally, the view is that the role religion in international conflict is a function of other factors. The real issues are political, social, and economic, and religion is a sort of a window-dressing for these other, more basic issues. As a result, the discussions of religion are often very simplistic and superficial.

In fact, religion, which is the field that I study, is a highly complex phenomenon. It is one of the most complicated subjects you can study. The mastery of any one religious tradition can occupy you for a lifetime, not to mention the subject of religion in general. Also, religion is connected to every level of human identity, and it therefore expresses itself on every level of human life and culture. So if you want to understand religion, you have to understand it on all these levels. You have to know something about everything.

Certainly outside factors have an influence on religion in the political, social, and economic realms, but this influence itself is also complicated, and religion cannot be viewed as just a function or an expression of these factors. It is an independent factor in its own right. I will cite one example to illustrate my point. Much of what motivates religious terrorists—and I am speaking specifically about Islamic terrorism—is that violence against one's enemies is seen as having a spiritual and transcendent purpose. It is a deeply religious experience, as difficult as that may be to comprehend. So besides the outside factors that influence religious actors to be violent, religious experience itself plays a key role in their violent activity. This insight has been noted by academic scholars and is based on interviews and studies that have been done on religious terrorists.

So my first point is you have to understand religion in order to understand religious extremism, including Islamic extremism which the West is so concerned about, and this understanding is sorely lacking among many of the academics and professionals who deal with terrorism. We must then ask: what role can religion play in combating terrorism, if any? Because of the complexity of the problem, one cannot expect a single, sweeping solution. Islamic terrorism takes many forms depending on place and time, and therefore the solution often has to be localized. Still, I will try to make some generalizations.

A point that is made repeatedly by scholars of religious ethics and those who deal with religion and international conflict, and it was just mentioned a few minutes ago by Mr. Swetnam, is that all major religions have a violent dimension to them, but they also have a peaceful dimension. It's therefore pointless to speak about any one religion being a religion of violence or a religion of peace. They all have both sides. And which side emerges is a complex issue as well. Again, social, political, economic factors play a role, but religion cannot be reduced to these factors. The major religions also have long histories which have given them each a unique character, and this element also has to be studied in order to get an understanding of which side of a religion will emerge under a given set of circumstances. What this means is that religion is the problem, but it can also be the solution, if we can find ways to accentuate the peaceful dimension of religion and strengthen the representatives of that dimension.

I myself have written about this ambiguity in religion with respect to Judaism. My latest book, which came out in 2011, was entitled *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism*. In it, I examined both the peaceful and violent dimensions of Judaism that developed from the Bible onward in order to get a better understanding of modern Zionism, which also has its peaceful and violent dimensions. My underlying motive was to get insight into the religious dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and how Jews might use religion to find ways to resolve the conflict. In recent years, I have also studied Christianity and Islam for the same purpose. Again, my goal has been to gain a better understanding of the ambiguity of these religions and to come up with insights for encouraging the peaceful sides of these religions to emerge.

So we need to strengthen the peaceful dimension of religion. How do we do that? How do we make religion a force for the good? Well, there are no easy answers. We could just kill all the bad people, which has generally been the method used by our government. But we have discovered that this is easier said than done. So we have to think of alternatives. Now in my experience, most people are actually peaceful people. And in my years of working with Muslims, my impression is that most Muslims are peaceful, but they cannot combat terrorism because they either do not have the power to do so, or they are simply too scared to speak up. And I am very sympathetic with these problems. So we have to give the moderate representatives of Islam the power and security they need to preach their viewpoint and make it influential.

One thing that would help would be including religious clerics with peaceful leanings at the highest levels of negotiations between governments who are involved in dealing with religious conflicts. But that generally does not happen. I am dismayed by the fact that in all the many rounds of peace-talks between Israelis and Palestinians that have taken place in recent years—the Rabbis, the Sheiks, and the Priests are generally excluded. This is just amazing. It is perhaps the best illustration that religion is not taken seriously enough by people in high levels of government. But if religion is not included in these negotiations, my feeling is that you will never have a solution to this conflict. For instance, the status of Jerusalem is one of the major problems dividing the two sides, and it is inconceivable that we are going to have a solution without having the clerics at the table.

I think there are also much less dramatic steps that we can take. What would be helpful would be to fund programs in which religious clerics who are interested in the peaceful dimensions of the religions, actually meet each other. It would even be more

valuable if the programs were international. One of the reasons that terrorism thrives is simply that the leaders and lay people of these communities rarely meet each other, and, therefore, they assume the worst about the religious other. Christian and Jewish clerics who bad mouth Islam have generally never met a Muslim. And I find that the same is the case vice versa. I cannot tell you how many Muslims I have met through my work who have never met a Jew, and I cannot tell you how many of them are shocked to find out that I am actually a nice guy. In short, we have become globalized enough to want to kill each other, but not globalized enough to be able to make peace with each other.

I know that meetings between clerics have occurred. You read about meetings periodically in the papers, and they sometimes involve clerics of distinction from different countries, but there are not nearly enough of these meetings. I have participated in some of them over the last ten years. At George Washington University, for instance, we are running a program in which we invite Saudi academics in the field of Religion, many of whom are also clerics, to dialogue with scholars of Religion at our university about religious issues. It has been a very interesting program. We need many more programs like this.

One final observation is that programs like this will take a long time to change minds. This is one reason why we do not see more programs of this kind. It is much easier to drop bombs and convince ourselves that we are going to take care of the problem quickly and decisively. But if we have learned anything in recent years, it is that change will not happen if this is all we do. We will need to have tremendous patience. This is one of the things I emphasize in all of my talks about religious extremism. We need great patience as we get to know each other across divisions of distance, language, and culture, and work on changing fundamental attitudes. This could take decades. This could take centuries. But we have to start somewhere, and we may as well do it now.

By Issam M. Saliba¹

This paper is limited to discussing the role in combatting terrorism of two religious traditions, Christianity and Islam.

Terrorism is but one manifestation of the intentional violence and aggression used against innocent people.

The evidence supporting the veracity of this postulate is readily available in our recorded history.

The atrocities committed by Attila the Hun pillaging cities and towns, bringing them to ruins, and murdering whole populations leaving no survivors behind are examples of the terrorist acts practiced in the fifth century AD.

The cruelty exhibited by the Mongols in conducting their wars during the 13th century provides other similar examples.

It has been reported that the Mongols assessed the extent of their victories by cutting off an ear from each dead enemy and that after the battle of Liegnitz, Poland in 1241:

They collected nine large sacks of ears and send them back to the Khan as proof of their victory.²

Genghis Khan is quoted as having said:

The greatest pleasure is to vanquish your enemies and chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth and see those dear to them bathed in tears, to ride their horses and clasp to your bosom their wives and daughters³

The Nazis attempts to exterminate Jews in the 20th century present examples of terrorism at its worst.

¹ Issam M. Saliba is the Legal Expert on Islamic Law at the Law Library of Congress; this unedited paper reflects a speech he delivered in his personal capacity on the 19th of December 2014, at the Potomac Institute and does not represent the position of the Library of Congress or any other U.S. government institutions.

² 1001 Battles That Changed the Course of World History, edited by Reg G. Grant, p. 168, at <https://books.google.com/books?id=s4njwZGrZg4C&pg=PA168&dq=Liegnitz+mongols+nine+sacks+of+ears&hl=en&sa=X&ei=x3yZVMPaFoixyQScnYDoBg&ved=0CCcQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=Liegnitz%20mongols%20nine%20sacks%20of%20ears&f=false>

³ The Conquest of a Continent: Siberia and the Russians, W. Bruce Lincoln, p. 10 at https://books.google.com/books?id=a7JrTvgU4yMC&pg=PA10&lpg=PA10&dq=The+greatest+pleasure+is+to+vanquish+your+enemies+and+chase+them+before+you,+to+rob+them+of+their+wealth&source=bl&ots=mCOgYqgF_G&sig=rJ8_7rSznllHFjdYZqFgrtffNw&hl=en&sa=X&ei=JImZVK7JF4OjyATtyICgAw&ved=0CFMQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=The%20greatest%20pleasure%20is%20to%20vanquish%20your%20enemies%20and%20chase%20them%20before%20you%20to%20rob%20them%20of%20their%20wealth&f=false

In his book *Civilization and its Discontents*⁴ Sigmund Freud attributes violence and aggression to human nature. He asserts:

That men are not gentle, friendly creatures wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked, but that a powerful measure of desire for aggression has to be reckoned as part of their instinctual endowment.

He further explains that:

This aggressive cruelty usually lies in wait for some provocation... it also manifests itself spontaneously and reveals men as savage beast to whom the thought of sparing their own kind is alien.

Freud's views on this subject, which the empirical evidence appears to support, are not shared by everyone.

The Seville Statement on Violence⁵ authored by an international group of scientists in 1986 and adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1989 asserts:

That it is scientifically incorrect to say that war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into our human nature

It also adds:

That biology does not condemn humanity to war.

In trying to determine the role of religion in combatting terrorism, and irrespective of whether violence is a biological instinct or an acquired behavior, we are compelled to point out that a lot of violence rising to the level of terrorism have been carried out in the name of religion.

In the early centuries of the Common Era a conflict arose among Christians as to the nature of Jesus Christ; was he completely divine and completely human or did his incarnation as the Son of God made him of only one divine nature?

One would have expected this conflict to remain within the confine of intellectual debate among scholars, priests, and theologians but it instead spread to the general public causing years of intra-Christian violence, terror, and mayhem.

One account of the violence resulting from this conflict as told by Edward Gibbon, the British historian, reads as follows:

⁴ P. 24 at <http://www2.winchester.ac.uk/edstudies/courses/level%20two%20sem%20two/Freud-Civil-Disc.pdf>

⁵ A copy is available at <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/seville.pdf>

Jerusalem was occupied by an army of monks; in the name of the one incarnate nature, they pillaged, they burnt, they murdered; the Sepulchre of Christ was defiled with blood;

This deadly superstition was inflamed, on either side, by the principle and the practice of retaliation: in the pursuit of a metaphysical quarrel, many thousands were slain, and the Christians of every degree were deprived of the substantial enjoyments of social life, ...⁶

Other examples of terrorist acts carried out in the name of Christianity include the atrocities committed by the successive waves of crusaders not only against Muslims, Jews, and even Christians in the Holy land but also against groups in the west considered heretics by the Catholic Church.

In describing the fate of one such group, the Cathars of southern France, Voltaire, the renowned personality of the enlightenment age, wrote the following:

The city of Beziers tried to hold out against the crusaders; all the inhabitants who sought refuge in a church had their throats cut and the city was reduced to ashes. The citizens of Carcassonne, frightened by this example, begged for mercy from the crusaders and their lives were spared. They were permitted to leave their city, almost naked, and all their goods were seized.⁷

These terrorist acts had been sanctioned by the religious leaders of the warring factions or the official representatives of the Catholic Church at the time.

In 1252 Pope Innocent the fourth issued a papal proclamation, known as *Ad Extirpanda* describing the rules to be applied in dealing with heretics.

In this proclamation he authorized torture, short only of killing and breaking limbs, in order to extract confessions of wrongdoing against the creed of the Church. Article or Law 25 of this proclamation reads as follows:

The *Podesta* or Rector has the authority to oblige all heretics that he may have in his power, without breaking limbs or endangering their lives, to confess their errors and to accuse other heretics whom they may know, as true assassins of souls and thieves of the Sacraments of God ...⁸

The first act of terrorism committed in the name of Islam is probably the murder of the fourth caliph, Ali bin Abi Taleb, by a group, known as al-Khawarij.

⁶ The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Chapter 47 at <http://www.ccel.org/g/gibbon/decline/volume2/chap47.htm>

⁷ Voltaire on the Wars against the Cathars of the Languedoc at http://www.midi-france.info/articles/t_voltairecathars.htm

⁸ Jordan Bishop, Aquinas on Torture, p. 1 at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.0028-4289.2006.00142.x/pdf>

Al-Khawarij accused the caliph of violating the word of God for agreeing to arbitrate the legitimacy of his appointment to office

Other examples of terrorist activities carried out in the name of Islam include the atrocities of the two notorious groups, known as al-Qarameta and al-Hashasheen. One account of the atrocities of the Qarmatians committed in 930, states as follows:

the Qarmatians had spread down in Hijaz, and flooded Mecca and Kaba with the blood of pilgrims ... They made it a scene of fire, blood and repine for 17 days. ... The Qarmatians choked up the sacred spring of Zamzam, the door of the Kaba was broken open, the veil covering the Kaba was torn down, and the sacred Black Stone was removed from the Kaba and taken to their headquarters⁹

The name al-Hashasheen, assassins, entered the English language to become synonymous with killing and murdering.

Terrorism in the name of Islam has produced the 9/11 attacks on the United States and is manifesting itself anew through the Islamic State of the Iraq and Syria, ISIS or ISIL.

With this record of violence can we expect religion to play a role in combatting terrorism?

The answer is yes because religion has the capacity to tame biological instincts, change acquired behavior, and give true meaning to scripture if its teaching emphasizes peace and toleration.

Christianity, after many years of questionable stances no longer condones violence committed in its name. To the contrary, its teaching today concentrates on peace, toleration, and love of others and its message to would-be-terrorists is that their actions are against what God is expecting from them.

With respect to Islam, the task is complicated:

1-there is no church or single body that represents Islam. This lack of central authority which originally gave Muslims the intellectual freedom to build a civilization based on peaceful coexistence and respect for diversity has become a hindrance by allowing terrorist groups such al-Qaeda and ISIS to speak on behalf of Islam as any other groups do;

2-the tool of reason that helped Muslims in the past understand their religion as preaching peaceful co-existence and respect for diversity has disappeared starting with the banishment of Ibn Rushd, the great Muslim Scholar and thinker of the 12th century, known in the West as Averroes.

The writings of Averroes which became the inspiration of the European Enlightenment were burned in public in his native Andalusia.

⁹ The Qarmatians in Bahrain at <http://ismaili.net/histoire/history05/history510.html>

What is amazingly surprising is that the vast majority of Muslims who reject and abhor violence are letting a small minority from among themselves to make Islam look like a religion of violence and aggression.

It is not enough for the Muslim majority to assert that Islam is a religion of peace; it is incumbent upon them to face, reexamine, and challenge the traditional interpretation of some of the passages of their scripture, the so-called verses of the sword.

These verses of the Koran upon which the terrorists rely to attack non-Muslims and defile their places of worship are the same verses that existed when the Prophet Mohammed pledged his word and the word of God to protect the lives, properties, and churches of the Christians of Najran.

The pledge reads in part as follows:

Najran and their followers are entitled to the protection of Allah and the security of Muhammad the Prophet, the Messenger of Allah, which security shall involve their persons, religion, lands and possessions ...¹⁰

They are the same verses that existed when the Prophet instructed Maaz bin Jabal, his representative in Yemen, that “no Jew shall be enticed to leave Judaism.”¹¹

And they are the same verses that existed when the Muslims refunded to the non-Muslim inhabitants of Hims the taxes levied on them when they, the Muslims, became unable to protect them against the advancing army of Heraclius.¹²

The role of the religion of Islam in combatting terrorism in this age where most terrorist groups are claiming to represent Islam shall be the most effective only if the majority of Muslims are able to make their voices heard, reintroduce the tool of reason in the interpretation of their scripture, and reclaim the intellectual heritage of their fallen heroes such as Averroes, Mohammed Abdo, and others.

A statement attributed to Sheikh Mohammed Abdo points out indirectly but affirmatively to the heavy responsibility placed on the Muslim majority; upon his return from a visit to Paris in the late 19th century he is reported to have said:

In Paris I saw Islam, I did not see Muslims

In Egypt I see Muslims, I don't see Islam

¹⁰ Imam al-Baladhuri, *The Origins of the Islamic State*, trans. by Philip Hitti, p. 100 at <https://ia802708.us.archive.org/29/items/originsofislamic00balarich/originsofislamic00balarich.pdf>

¹¹ Id. p. 109

¹² Id. p. 211

Dr. Sayyid Syeed

Greetings of peace and *as-salaam-alaikum*. I hope by now you received my gifts. One is the Koran; the verses about love, compassion, and peace, that is the majority of the Koran. Also, you must have received another brochure which is “Against Terrorism and Religious Extremism: Muslim Position and Responsibilities.” So please make sure that when you leave you have one copy so that I do not have to discuss those things here.

I want to introduce myself and I want to introduce the community that I am representing in North America. It is a new identity, it is a new reality, and it has a tremendous global role to play.

I came here about 40 years ago. In the ‘50s and ‘60s, many of the Muslim countries were becoming independent from their European colonial occupation. Therefore, the first priority that they had was to send their students to America for advanced studies in science, technology, and education. So in 1960’s, we had about a quarter million Muslim students in American universities. This was a new thing for America to have that many Muslims in American universities and to have that many Muslims in America observing their religious practices like praying and fasting as a community. We did not have the Islamic Centers and Mosques that we have today. So it was the Christian churches that opened their doors to these Muslims to pray here.

It was unprecedented. It was new for Muslims also because their earlier generations had been to Europe— Indo- Pakistanis and Malaysians going to London for higher studies, Algerians and Moroccans would go to France. But the relation between the host society and incoming students was quite unequal. It was for the first time that Muslim students in America saw a new reality. A pluralist democracy where they were treated as equals and practice of religion was encouraged. So it was very much a new experience for both, Muslim students as well as the host society.

This was the environment in which Muslim Students Association of the U.S. and Canada was born in 1963. That is why last year we were celebrating our 50th anniversary. So I also came to do my Ph.D. here as a student. After a few years I became President of the Muslim Students Association of the U.S. and Canada, in the later ‘70s. As President of the Muslim Student Association of the U.S. and Canada, which had already done so much good work in America, I thought this was a wonderful opportunity. It should not stay just as the Muslim Student Association. America deserved to have a modern day Islamic community at par with Christian and Jewish communities. This would be our gift to America. This would be a gift to the Muslim world. For the first time the Muslims will be proud of observing a Muslim community flourishing in a pluralist democracy and that will be a gift that the Muslim world would recognize. So while I was President, we transformed this student organization into Islamic Society of North America. So that is what we were celebrating last year.

So it is amazing that this happened in 1963. That was the year when Martin Luther King, Jr. was having the Dream speech, leading a march on Washington. Usually, in America

and around the world, people when they think of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his march and of the whole civil rights movement in America, they think that 1963 was a watershed; a beginning of a more inclusive society in America which recognized people of different colors and different races . But the fact is that it was also the year when America became inclusive in terms of welcoming a new religion that is Islam. So our growth, our development, started in 1963 in terms of having well-coordinated growth and development of Islam in America. But the whole project was an interfaith project. We were working together with our Christian and Jewish neighbors and organizations. Working so closely with the National Council of Churches representing about 50 million Protestants, so closely with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops representing about 84 million Catholics, and the Union of Reform Judaism and other denominations. It is amazing what could be achieved when you have such multiple faith groups and civil rights reforms supporting and helping you to move forward.

It was in 2010 that we thought our honeymoon in America was going to end. What happened was that a pastor in Florida threatened that he was going to burn the Koran. That was the time when in New York the Ground Zero Mosque project was under attack. There were people who were resenting the building of the Ground Zero Mosque. That was the same time when we had problems building an Islamic center in the Midwest in Murphysboro Tennessee. There was a wave of anti-Muslim sentiment in America. That was the time I was getting letters of support from Catholics, Protestants, and Jewish leaders condemning the anti-Muslim rhetoric. They were assuring us that these hate mongers did not represent Christianity or Judaism. They decided that they would come to Washington and hold a summit of religious leaders on August 7, 2010 where they would articulate their rejection of anti-Muslim sentiment that was growing quite loud and intense.

On September 7, 2010, a summit of Christian and Jewish religious leaders was held in Washington DC and at their major press conference at the National Press Building, these leaders denounced anti-Muslim bigotry. But they did something more than that. They created a campaign called “Shoulder to Shoulder with American Muslims, Upholding American Values.” And you know what America values they were talking about. They said that they cannot allow these hate mongers to attack Muslim community in America, because attack on one religion was an attack on all religions. They said that those who indulge in bigotry against a religious community will be destroying the most cherished asset of our society, that is respect for diversity. They raised about a quarter of a million dollars to run this campaign. They advertised the position of a director for Shoulder to Shoulder with American Muslims. (www.ShoulderShoulderCampaign.org). We in the Islamic Society of North America host the office of the Shoulder to Shoulder in our office on the Capitol Hill, steered and funded by Christian and Jewish leaders.

They have done a wonderful job. It is now four years work of this organization in opposing this kind of Islamophobia in America. You must have seen for yourselves that in 2010, the anti-Muslim rhetoric was about to become mainstream. But these people have made sure that anti-Muslim sentiment is no longer a respectable discourse.

Now when you are living in an environment where Islam, Christianity, Judaism, major representatives, organizations, and institutions together are participating in creating an environment of mutual respect and religious freedom, then you can imagine what that means. That means that when I turn on the television and I hear that a Church has been burned in Pakistan or I hear that something of this nature has happened anywhere in the world, it becomes a part of my Islamic responsibility to come forward and see what we can do together to avert it. That is exactly what we have been doing.

I have just come back last week as you know from Abu Dhabi. We had an international conference of religious leaders on how to deal with this kind of violent extremism. In every country we have now Religions for Peace and then we have the World Religious for Peace an international peace movement. So we go to different countries and identify Muslim scholars and leaders from other faith communities who have a similar understanding of their faiths. This way we are able to create a new reality. I have been to Pakistan, to Iran with a similar kind of delegations and met with Christian leaders and leaders of other minorities there. We have raised funds here in the US for reconstructing churches that had been burned there. It is very surprising to many that Muslims in America are collecting funds to help the Christians in Pakistan to rebuild their church properties. But this is what Muslims are expected to do according to the Quranic commandments, protect places of worship of other faiths. Quran (22: 50).

This is happening from country to country. Our major impact you will feel in Tunisia for example, in the sense that when the Arab Spring came, there was an opportunity to redefine how they are going to shape their politics, what kind of governments and what kind of role for minorities. We celebrate the fact that our 50 years' of experience of living in a democratic society is appreciated by the Islamic party, Ennahda and incorporated as a priority in adopting their new constitution. We do not want to see that Islam is used to justify dictatorships and deprivation of religious freedom and human rights. We owe the growth of our community to freedom and respect for diversity. We would like to see that these values that are enshrined in the Quran are implemented without any compromise. We celebrate these achievements in different measures in different countries but continue to advocate for safety and security of the minorities. American Muslims are destined to play a role in promoting a better understanding of Islam here and a better practice of Islamic vision for human dignity and respect for diversity abroad.

Tina Ramirez

As presented:

Thank you so much for having me here today to share with you. I have spent ten years in DC so this is a little bit different for any of you that know me or know what I usually talk about, which might be refreshing for some of you.

In September, I had an opportunity to go to Iraq. All of us are very aware of the situation there with ISIS and what is happening to the Yazidis, Christians, and to many other religious communities. When I was there, one of the questions that kept coming up and really follows a lot of what the Rabbi had to say is how do we respond to this? What do we do? How can we survive in the future? Is there a way to overcome this terrorism or this violence as a society?

One of the women I met with was Vien Dahkil, who many of you may remember. She is the Yezidi Member of Iraq's Parliament who gave a passionate plea to parliament in August saying "My people are dying on Mount Sinjar. Please help them." Finally after eight days, they sent in helicopters and began to rescue some of the Yezidis. When I met with Vien she said, "We have had 72 genocides against our community in our history. This is the 73rd and we cannot survive if this continues."

I shared with her, "You know, when I was working on Iraq policy at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and later for a member of the U.S. Congress, we kept trying to discuss the religious dimension of the conflict and the need to invest in religious freedom in Iraq and it was constantly ignored." And I asked her, "What is your response to that?" She said, "We cannot ignore religious freedom if we want any future for democracy, for peace, for co-existence in this country. Our people will not survive. The Christians will not survive. The Muslims will not survive. The Kakai and the Shabak. It is impossible for us to have a country if we continue to ignore this issue."

And so now I come to you as the President and Founder of an organization called Hardwired, which works to provide solutions. We work to ensure that the religious dimension of conflict is not ignored, but mitigated through the education and training of local leaders and members of society who can prevent more conflict.

Hardwired, for me, is how I am made and how I believe all of us are made which is to worship or believe in something bigger than ourselves. The religious dimension of who we are as human beings is something that cannot be ignored, as others have mentioned. 86% of the world's population recognizes some kind of religion. The rest are not necessarily unreligious. But the religious dimension of conflict also cannot be ignored. It cannot be ignored in Iraq or many of the other countries or places we have discussed. So the question is what can we really do? And I will respond to that by the end.

When I began Hardwired, I had already been working for several years in Iraq and with many other countries on religious freedom. Hardwired was an outgrowth if this work

because I saw a critical need to train local leaders to be able to defend religious freedom on their own without intervention from foreign governments. We began to work with religious communities, but also with government officials, civil society leaders, and many others to help them at a very grassroots level understand what religious freedom means, what human rights are, and how to navigate the role of religion in society in ways that would help mitigate conflict and bring freedom to more people.

We help local leaders articulate and defend human dignity and human rights across the board for everyone in societies where religious oppression is prevalent to help them overcome the violence and terrorism that often result from religious oppression. Over the last few years we have developed a training curriculum we have used in many countries. But I want to explain how we used it in Sudan because I think it relates to a situation related to terrorism and something very practical that was done.

As many of you know, in Sudan you have the only sitting president who has been indicted under the War Crimes Tribunal for crimes of genocide and inhumanity against his people, against both Muslims and Christians, even though he does it on the basis of religious belief. He harbored Osama bin Ladin for many years when he was plotting his terrorist attacks against U.S. embassies throughout Africa. This is a terrorist nation in many respects. It is considered as such under the U.S. sanctions.

A few years ago, when the South succeeded from Sudan, some Christians in the North approached me. They said they wanted to advocate for their rights in the new constitution being considered, but they did not know how to do that. They asked me, "Can you help us?" I brought together many of the Christian and Muslim human rights leaders and taught them what international law says about their rights and how religious freedom is in the interest not just of them but of other members of their society that are also oppressed by this government, such as women under certain Shariah laws as we have seen this past summer and also Muslims in Darfur who have also been victims of genocide in Sudan, and many others.

By the end, they were able to draft a constitutional provision on religious freedom that defended all of these communities. They recognized that if this basis of religious freedom is not protected in their society for everybody then their country would not be able to move forward.

They began to work with civil society throughout Sudan to build education and awareness at a very local level of why religious freedom, the freedom of religious expression, of belief, of thought, of conscience for everybody was critical of the foundation laid in Sudan at the time. So that was happening over the last few years.

This past summer, everything that we were doing was put to the test. As many of you may have heard the story of Meriam Ibrahim, a young woman 8 ½ months pregnant who was sentenced to death for apostasy. What was society's response? You may remember seven years ago in Sudan an incident with a British school teacher who had a teddy bear and one of the students in her class was allowed to name the school teddy bear and he named it Mohamed. There were major riots and violence and calls for the death of this teacher. She

was imprisoned for 18 days. Finally, the British got her out of there. So seven years later, what happened? Was it the same response? No. I think the reason there was not the same response is because of the education we invested in that community over the last several years and also because of the openness to democracy and certain ideas that happened under the peace agreement.

Let me explain what happened behind the scenes that most people will never hear about in the media. Most of our work we are very quiet about so you probably would not have heard about it anyway. When Meriam was sentenced, the lawyers we had trained began to work with her lawyers, she had two at the time and it expanded to five. All of her lawyers, by the way, were Muslim. They were not fellow Christians standing in her defense. They made statements saying that every human being, everybody in Sudan, deserves religious freedom. This is not just for us. This is for everybody.

The students that we worked with over the years stood out in front of the courthouse in Sudan, this is unheard of, and protested in her defense and made statements saying, "We are Meriam." This is a Christian woman, an apostate, who in many countries would not be treated this way and yet they stood in her defense. Opposition leaders stood in her defense and made statements. Several of the people we worked with who were journalists and others on the ground were able to get statements in support of Meriam from different opposition leaders. Even the National Umma Party, the Islamic party in Sudan, made a statement in her defense.

Our friends there held press conferences. The amount of activity that happened on the ground at a grassroots level by the people standing in defense of a woman considered an apostate, saying she deserves religious freedom and that this is the foundation we want in their country was remarkable. And that happened because of years of effort of helping them understand what religious freedom really means.

That is what is going to counter terrorism in countries like Sudan and in Iraq and many other countries. That is what Hardwired does.

So take that example now and go back to Iraq. When I was there meeting with Yezidi leaders I had worked with for years, hearing the stories of what was happening to their community and to the Chaldeans and Assyrians and others was heart breaking. As I am sure anyone who watches the news feels. Most people in the world are religious and we do not want to see that what is happening in Iraq or religious oppression anywhere else for any human being.

But the key is that if we cannot work at the local level to teach key leaders how to understand and articulate the concepts embedded in respect for human rights, such as the equal dignity and humanity of the other person, they will not be able to break down the intolerance and bigotry, that are necessary for challenging ideologies that are growing, like ideologies of ISIS or Bashir's ideologies about Islam which a majority of the population reject.

Empowering those local communities through education and training, has been a critical aspect of what we do at Hardwired. It is because for years working in Congress we were always too late. Because usually the problems have been going on for so many years in these countries and the people did not know how to respond themselves so they look to foreign governments for leadership. But that comes with a lot of political baggage as we all know. If we can help them on the ground respond then that will be so much more effective.

Countries experiencing religious oppression – or that could head in that direction – need education and training at a local level to help the population think differently about the other person and about religious freedom. That is critical to mobilize public support for changes in laws. If you do not have both of those, you really cannot have either as a defense mechanism to prevent extremism from growing. So you will need legal and social changes. That is what Hardwired does. We were just in Nepal working with leaders on their constitution and we work around the world to prepare local leaders to engage the legal and social sectors of their society to promote greater respect for religious freedom.

I want to add something, not about Nepal, but about India because much the conversation has been centered on Islam and the Middle East, but 1.2 billion people live in India. In my opinion, it is one of the fastest growing places for homegrown terrorism in the world. The reason I say that is because you have the only sitting head of state, who was denied a visa to the United States on the basis of violating religious freedom because he allowed and gave orders to police to stand down when Hindu nationalists were attacking a group of Muslims in his state in Gujarat in 2002.

In my opinion, it is disturbing that the U.S. Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, recently worked to bring this man to our country and wanted to offer him a free place to sit in Congress speaking to both houses of Congress, while ignoring the fact that this man is responsible for the growth of one of the greatest threats to religious tolerance and pluralism in the world today, not Islam, but Hindu nationalism and the threat it poses to people of many different faiths and other Hindus who support secularism in India.

There has been a lot of discussion about Islamic extremism; it is real, obviously with ISIS. But what I have seen in Iraq has happened on a similar scale in India for so many years. It cannot be ignored, except at our own peril. That is what we have seen in Iraq. Religion and the religious dimension of conflict were ignored. That is why we have the situation today. We can change that in Iraq and India and so many other places where we can have a huge percentage change on the scale of how much growth there is of religious oppression and extremism if we invest in education and training at the local level. But if we continue to empower leaders like Narendra Modi or like others that espouse ideas that are intolerant of other faith communities and allow for violence and terrorism against those communities, we should not expect anything different.

A lot of the discussion about religious leaders needing to speak out is extremely important. I would actually change the title of the topic from “The Role of Religion in Combating Terrorism” to “The Role of the Individual” because most people in the world are religious, as I mentioned. We have a belief that we follow and if individuals, regardless of

whatever belief system they follow, believe in the dignity of the other human person and their ability to have the freedom of religion, thought, conscience, and belief, then that will enable greater defense against the growth of extremist ideas that are allowed to foment when people use religion to their own political advantage. So I will conclude there but thank you and I look forward to questions later.

Additional written remarks (as prepared but not delivered)

The religious dimension of world conflict cannot be ignored. Both religious and ideological regimes and social groups are attacking individuals who hold different beliefs and forcing them to either replace or suppress those beliefs with the ones they seek to impose.

In each case, violations of the basic human rights are destroying the dignity of humanity everywhere.

Two-thirds of the world's population lives in countries that place restrictions on their freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. 68% in 2007 to 76% in 2013. Its growing.

Social hostility is increasing – Affecting 45% of the world's population in 2007 and 74% by 2013.

Government restrictions are increasing – Affecting 58% of the world's population in 2007 and 64% in 2013.

Religion related terrorist violence is increasing as well – affecting 9% of countries in 2007 and 20% of countries by 2013.

No one is immune – every religious or belief community has been affected somewhere.

Religious communities have a critical role to play in combatting terrorism. They can contribute to a vicious negative cycle by fueling intolerance and hatred toward others or they can reinforce a positive cycle for freedom by how they engage their communities to respect the rights and freedoms of others.

For example:

In Pakistan, Salman Taseer and Shabaz Bhatti spoke out in defense of a mother sentenced to death for blasphemy. Hundreds have been killed by members of society with impunity because of these laws. There was a major terrorist attack on two Ahmadiya mosques a few years ago.

But these laws have inflamed social hostility toward religious minorities and Muslims who challenge them, like Taseer. The recent terrorist attack in Pakistan is a result of such societal intolerance being allowed to spread without restraint throughout the society. Taseer and Bhatti tried to change this. They gave their lives for it.

In Indonesia, former president Abdulrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) led a great example in standing for religious freedom for all. Though the constitution identifies *pancesila*, or respect for religious differences, as a key foundation for the country, he stepped in numerous times to see that the people understood this concept and respected the rights of groups like the Ahmadiyah which were considered heretical by some Muslim groups attacking them.

Malala almost gave her life but was saved. She's now the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for her work challenging the religious oppression of the Taliban – a terrorist group that denies women equal rights and is involved in countless other violations of religious freedom.

Ultimately, without these leaders within their respective faith communities challenging the ideology of terrorism imposed by the Taliban and other laws that breed terrorists throughout society, nothing would change.

They give people hope that change is possible.

In Sudan, a young Christian mother was sentenced to death last summer for apostasy. Standing in her defense were five Muslim lawyers who recognized that the government uses religion to terrorize people throughout the society.

Indeed, President Bashir of Sudan is the only sitting head of state indicted for war crimes and genocide against his own people. He harbored Osama bin Laden when he launched his attacks on US embassies throughout Africa and has supported terrorism abroad.

But when this woman was sentenced, it shocked the conscience of the people, and even the Umma party, an Islamic party allied with Bashir opposed his interpretation of Islamic law that would put a woman to death for apostasy. Religious and political leaders and members of the public stood up and challenged an ideology that bred terrorism.

We've seen the rise of terrorism in India, Nigeria and Iraq among other places. It follows similar patterns and the only antidote to it is religious freedom and education that can equip the populace to stand against it.

To address this growing phenomenon, Hardwired looks to education.

In 2000, prior to 9/11, a student of mine was transformed through human rights education. He was violent and didn't care about the dignity of others. But he came from Afghanistan, a place where women were being stoned to death and Buddhist history was being destroyed.

I asked him to do a human rights project on the women in Afghanistan. At the end, his poem said it all – writing to President Bush in 2000 he said “No woman should be held like a bird in a cage and denied their dignity. They need your help.” 14 years later I met

another student from that class who shared how that experience continued to impact the way she saw others.

Education can make a difference.

In Sudan, Hardwired trained religious and civil society leaders as well as university students. They came together to stand in defense of the woman sentenced to death for apostasy because they all recognized that no one was safe when religious oppression is allowed to attack any one of them.

In India and Iraq, we plan to launch similar education programs to help communities challenge the growing sectarian tensions and terrorism against religious communities. For too long, the religious dimension of conflict has been ignored at the peril of many religious communities. Yet, through education, these communities will be better prepared to fight the intolerance that breed conflict.

And in cooperation with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, Hardwired launched an educational program to reach youth around the world with a better understanding of religious freedom. As an outgrowth of this partnership, and to help more people live in freedom, we've also launched the 18by18 Campaign to help more youth know what their rights are and how to advocate for them.

Education has the ability to serve as a powerful force against terrorism, when communities know their rights and stand together in their defense. And religious leaders have the power to reinforce or undermine these efforts. We're helping them see how they can help and why religious freedom is in their best interest.

While in Iraq in September, we met Vien Dakhil who said that after 72 genocides against her community, the Yezidis, they now face the 73rd and may not survive.

Now, more than ever, she understands that without religious freedom, the people will never be safe in Iraq.

Her community is not alone in this respect. No one is safe where religious oppression is allowed to foment, breeding terrorism and denying individuals their most basic human rights, freedoms, and dignity.

Dr. Maryann Cusimano Love

I do want to give you three concepts that I think will help us sum up some of the things that have been discussed today and will address how, yes, religion is relevant in combating violent extremism, and what some of the best practices are.

Religious actors bring three I's to world politics. They bring institutions, they bring ideas, and they bring imagination. Religion's three I's-- institutions, ideas, and imagination-- are key in world affairs.

Governments are not wired to deal with all sorts of non-state actors—violent non-state actors, terrorist non-state actors, religious actors. Governments are wired to deal with governments of other sovereign states. They do not get non-state actors and particularly they do not get religion. They have a difficult time engaging with actors other than states.

When governments do get religious actors, in areas for example of relief and development, they are more likely to get the first I. Governments often appreciate the way in which religious institutions help to provide "the goody basket" of charity, of relief and development, of humanitarian response to famine and natural disaster. To the extent that governments get religious actors, they may get that "I" of how religious institutions provide needed material assistance, in relief, public health, education. But they really do not get the nonmaterial aspects of religious actors, the other two I's—ideas and imagination. I think the strongest response that religious actors can bring to counter violent extremism, the best practice responses, are when you bring all three of those I's together—institutions, ideas, and imagination.

We need to demystify some myths that are out there, both about religious actors and about the overlay between religion and terrorism. First, we need to understand the context. Religion is resurgent around the world at a time when states are challenged, but also at a time when peace is breaking out. Now I know that sounds counterintuitive to say. We have certainly seen the headlines screaming of violence every day. But the data bears this out. Tina has already brought up that religion is resurgent. 85% of people around the planet report that they believe in a Supreme Being. They practice religious or spiritual practices. This was against the grain of what was predicted throughout the 20th century. Policy makers and scholars argued that God was dead. Religion was dying. During the mid-20th century that is how it appeared, with atheistic communism spreading and shuttering religious institutions in many places, and with secularism on the rise in Europe. That thesis turned out not to be true. The great Soviet and Communist experiments in battering out religion did not succeed and religion returned resurgent. Religion is expanding, not dead.

Simultaneously, peace is breaking out. Major armed conflicts have declined by more than half since the end of the Cold War around the world. That is major armed conflicts where more than a thousand people die in battlefield deaths in a calendar year. Wars, major armed conflicts, are decreasing around the world. That context does not help you if you are in one of the areas where hot war still exists. That global trend line is great if you are in Colombia where 40 years of civil war are starting to come to a conclusion and peace accords

are under way. If you are in the Philippines where 40 years of civil war are starting to be resolved and the peace process is under way, those trend lines help you there. It does not help you if you are in Iraq, Syria, or Afghanistan. We have to be nimble enough to understand that just as it can be sunny in Florida and raining in New York at the same time, we have to understand that peace can break out globally while there is still violence in particular areas. We can understand that religion can be expanding globally and can be part of the peace process in many regions, but also can be present at the scene of the crime in some areas of violence.

What do we know about the data lines and data trends regarding terrorism? We know that most terrorism does not succeed. Most terrorist organizations go out of business in less than a year. They have a poorer start-up rate than a new business operation. We know that most terrorist attacks kill no one. However, we also know that high casualty terrorist attacks are on the rise and that most terrorism occurs in war zones. So terrorism is a very serious problem particularly in those remaining hot spots, those remaining war zones.

What does that mean for religious actors? That means if religious actors want to help contain violent extremism, we have to help contain the world's worst wars. We have to help bring the wars to an end. And that will bring the worst terrorism to an end. Most all acts of terrorism occur in the world's worst war zones, and all of the acts of high impact terrorist attacks, high casualty terrorist attacks occur in those war zones. Ending the wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, would do a great deal towards decreasing terrorism and decreasing terrorist casualties. Understanding the context focuses our efforts a bit.

There are lots of efforts by religious actors to try to curtail violent extremists and to try to do peace building. Some have been mentioned here, for example, public statements by clerical leaders decrying violence, decrying suicide bombings, decrying terrorist attacks, and stating that religious ideas do not support terrorism, do not support suicide bombers. Those activities are great and should be supported and continued. But they are really only getting at one of the three I's. Those kinds of public declaratory statements respond to a particular act of terrorism and say, "our ideas do not support that." That is one of the I's--ideas. That is not all three.

There is a program, for example, that some of my former students from Catholic University, officers in the U.S. military put together called Voices of Islam. It is part of a counter-terrorism and counter-violent extremism program in Afghanistan where they took Afghan community leaders, young males who were often illiterate and not well versed in their own religion and were swayed by Taliban ideas. And they simply brought them to Jordan and introduced them to Islamic religious leaders in Jordan. That helped them to expand their own religious literacy, their ideas of what Islam stood for, their imagination of global Islam and what an Islamic community could and should be like. And they were able to bring them back to Afghanistan, to have them be very important centers for legitimizing and moderating the tone of the local community. That is a very interesting program that gets to two of the I's—ideas and imagination—but still was not well institutionalized and so was a model with sustainability problems going forward. The U.S. government is not a good actor

to be doing religious education on Islam. That needs to be locally owed, locally operated, originating from local initiatives and institutions.

What are some of the best programs out there where religious actors are helping to get at the root causes of violence, to reduce the world's worst wars, and to counter terrorist extremism? I think those are ones in which we see religious actors working together across sectarian lines bringing all three I's of institutions behind action programs, not just inter-religious dialogue but for inter-religious action.

We have talked a lot about how religious ideas can be used as a source of peace or to promote violence. Peace is really a very high level concept. Certainly everyone can say in general we are in favor of peace. How do you operationalize that in social science or policy terms? I think a better term would be social cohesion. What are religious actors doing to promote social cohesion? If you think about, for example, the ten commandments, the Abrahamic tradition-- what are the Ten Commandments but a recipe for social cohesion? They are very practical. You cannot have social cohesion in a community if the people are killing each other, taking each other's sexual partners, stealing each other's property, dismissing and dishonoring each other's elders. That is not a recipe for social cohesion of a community. So the Abrahamic rules are really a recipe for social cohesion and that is what religions at their roots are trying to promote.

How are religious actors out there creatively working to build social cohesion, either in war zones or in areas where conflicts loom large, if they are trying to inoculate and prevent conflict from spreading over to other communities? We see activities, for example, of Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Internationalis where they are working to build cocoa-cooperatives in Ghana among Islamic and Christian communities in areas to be able to have integrated community economic development models. The cocoa cooperatives are owned and operated by these local groups. They work together for their cocoa cooperatives. That is an economic development model but it has the peace-building lens to it because it presents the idea of social cohesion, the imagination of being part of a larger community, and the institutional support of these religious actors in helping that development and peacebuilding model go forward. We see these in creative attempts in Nigeria to have inter-religious actions on counter-malaria programs. They build social cohesion and trust building programs through activities on common concerns. The regularized, institutionally supported activities help increase relationships among the communities and get at some of the root causes of conflict.

In my own field of international relations there is absolutely a tendency to dismiss religious actors and instead say war is all about economics or it is all about politics. But others can go to the other extreme as well and say it is all about religion and there are no political or economic roots. And both of those are false steps. What do we know about the roots of conflict? We know that areas where conflicts return, areas that are subject to recurring cycles of conflict, what the World Bank refers to as the "conflict trap," are those areas that have declining economies, declining GDP, a high youth bulge, that have a history of conflict in the last five years, and particularly economies that are not well diversified and that are typically natural resource dependent. The map of the arc of instability that we started out with today is a map of countries that have almost all of these red flags. We know that

countries that have those red flags will be more prone to conflict due to these pre-existing conditions, these economic and political concerns. Then when you throw violent religious actors into that mix, that can be fuel to the fire on already tenuous circumstances.

There is another myth to bust. You often hear religious actors referred to as trans-state nongovernmental actors. A friend and colleague at Harvard University says religious actors are like Doctors Without Borders: they move across these international borders. That analogy is false. We have to understand that religious actors are not non-state actors, *they are pre-state actors*. This is not an academic splitting of hairs. This is an understanding that religious actors, with the exception of the few new ones like the Mormons and the Church of Scientology, new religious actors, but the major world religions are all pre-state actors. They existed millennia before the founding of the modern sovereign state in 1648 at the Treaty of Westphalia. What does that mean? It means the three I's of those religious actors-- their institutions, ideas, and imaginations--these are very well developed and very old. You do not turn to Doctors Without Borders and ask them for their law to resolve disputes between competing communities. Doctors Without Borders does not have laws. It does not marry people. It does not bury people. It does not have a book of holy scriptures and holy ideas that people pray and meditate over each day. Religious actors have all these. They have laws, they have courts, they have constitutions, they have well-developed ideas and imagination. They also have well developed institutions in public health and education and healthcare as well as in law.

Why is that important? Many states are weak or failing. Many states are corrupt or illegitimate. Examples abound. An example of a weak or failing state is Somalia. A corrupt or illegitimate state is Nigeria. There are also states that are predatory, that prey upon rather than protect their own people, such as the government of North Sudan, indicted by the ICC for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Predatory states are places where the government is killing their own population, for example, in Syria, where the government is the one doing the killing. In these states that are not working, people ask, "Who can we turn to?" What other institutions are there out there that can respond to human needs for social cohesion, for law, for institutions, for services? Where state institutions fail or are seen as illegitimate or predatory, people turn to pre-state actors for those institutions that those religious actors can provide. The strongest responses to counter violent extremism are methods that promote social cohesion, whether that is conflict that is intra-religious as we see in Yemen and Sudanese violence and as we see in Colombia, or that is inter-religious, across religious lines, as we see in some of the other areas of the arc of conflict. If we use that lens of the three I's providing needed institutions, ideas, and imagination of social cohesion at a time when states are unable or unwilling to provide services and social cohesion, I think it helps us understand which of these many important suggestions that have emerged from our discussion, which of these have some opportunity to have some real impact, to be around ten years from now. We should be talking about "three I" models of success, versus actions to counter terrorism and violent extremism that are more ad hoc, drive-by and lack long term possibility for continuation and local community sustainability. Religious actors can bring their institutions, ideas, and imagination to serve social cohesion in places that need all these.

Academic Centers

Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies (IUCTS)

Established in 1994, the activities of IUCTS are guided by an International Research Council that offers recommendations for study on different aspects of terrorism, both conventional and unconventional. IUCTS is cooperating academically with universities and think tanks in over 40 countries, as well as with governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental bodies.

International Center for Terrorism Studies (ICTS)

Established in 1998 by the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, in Arlington, VA, ICTS administers IUCTS activities and sponsors an internship program in terrorism studies.

Inter-University Center for Legal Studies (IUCLS)

Established in 1999 and located at the International Law Institute in Washington, D.C., IUCLS conducts seminars and research on legal aspects of terrorism and administers training for law students.

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