

SECOND IMCTC MONTHLY FORUM CALLS FOR PROACTIVE VISION TO COUNTER EXTREMISM



As the Second Monthly Forum organized and hosted by IMCTC on 22 July 2019 commenced, the participants called for identifying the suspicions sowed and fueled by extremist ideologues in order to further provide cogent and telling answers in such a method so as to be a knowledge-based reference for those countering the ideology across the IMCTC Member Countries. Equally important, they also underscored the crying need to create media messages aimed at addressing violent extremist ideology within a framework of a sound and informed strategy built on scientific principles, while laying down ideological treatment and control of violent extremism in line with a proactive vision based on forecasting threat, developing work plans and designing programs in accordance with priorities and a previously set agenda.

The foregoing Forum, themed "*Building Ideological and Research Capacities to Counter Violent Extremism*", produced a set of recommendations that emphasize and foreground the pressing need to adopt immunization and protection based on prevention, sensitization and fostering awareness of extremist and deviant ideas to best ensure that none as such is surreptitiously leaked to the minds of the youth. In the same vein, the recommendations also encourage researchers to further investigate and

research into violent extremism, which refute and rebut the concepts and baseless allegations provoked by violent extremism, while analyzing the structure of violent trends and providing diverse visions of all forms of violence and extremism.

Spearheaded by a wide range of experts coming from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan, the Forum also recommended developing a joint database to gather information about terrorist organizations, institutions, programs, events and publications relevant to the ideological treatment and control of violent extremism in the Islamic world. By the same token, the Forum also stressed the crying need to train and groom specialists for countering violent extremism and terrorism in the Islamic world to better apply and implement approaches and applications to measure the effectiveness of intervention programs developed to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism.

Furthermore, the forum highlighted the importance of joint action and coordination between the centers concerned with countering extremist ideology and violent behavior in various fields at international and regional levels, while building a body of experts (think tanks) to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the Islamic world, leading up to creating a key reference for those engaged in this field and providing ample opportunities for close coordination and cooperation.

His Excellency Major General Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Moghedi, Secretary-General of IMCTC, stated that while the experiences of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Pakistan were being reviewed and showcased, the Forum opened up for discussion the expertise of the research centers specialized in countering violent extremism. Of great note, Al-Moghedi further added that the Forum held was one of other monthly forums hosted by the IMCTC to draw on the experiences of the IMCTC Member Countries and learn from their expertise within the areas and scope of work of the IMCTC, especially countering the terrorist ideology in the IMCTC Member Countries while vehemently contesting its theories, theses and concepts.

The Forum was moderated by Abdulrahman bin Mohammed Omar Asiri, Professor of Sociology at Imam Muhammad bin Saud University and Professor of Prince Nayef Chair for National Unity Studies.

In his opening key-note speech, Colonel Dr. Hassan Al-Amri, Director of Planning and Coordination Department of the IMCTC Center, pointed out that intellectual efforts have become an essential weapon in the face of various forms of crimes, primarily terrorism crimes. In the same vein, Al-Amri called for building intellectual and research capacities to take an active role in the midst of such existing conflict between people and terrorism. Al-Omari further stated that the 22nd July's Forum provides a quantum leap and scientific contribution to the prevention of the great danger of terrorism to our societies, security and stability. The Forum comes second in a series of multiple forums hosted and held by IMCTC, making up a scientific and knowledge-based platform for exchanging and sharing ideas on countering terrorism and violent extremism.

Additionally, Al-Amari emphasized that not only do terrorists perpetrate their crimes through suicide bombings, assassinations, targeting the lives of innocent people and the bombing of buildings and facilities, they also commit what is more deadly and more damaging through words loaded with evil, dripping with virulent venom, shrouded in thirst for blood-shedding. Given the whole labyrinthine situation, the intellectual efforts made are critically important in that they expose the glaringly obvious flaw of such a destructive ideology along with its deeply ingrained deviance and delusion. Al-Amari further explained that holding such academic events and forums as is the case of this successful and blessed Forum is a factor contributory to undermining the structure of the destructive ideology through conducting training workshops and courses and hosting conferences to serve as a block to the ideas flooding into the terrorists' minds and a step to eradicate the scourge.

The Forum featured three research papers for review and discussion presented by three prestigious and renowned research centers. Following a brief introduction by the moderator to the three key speakers, His Excellency Ambassador Khan Hasham bin Siddiq, President of the Islamabad Institute for Political Research, first presented his research paper "Pakistan's Strategy in Intellectual Treatment of Terrorism", in which Siddiq discussed the concept of violent extremism and how different it is from the concept of terrorism along with its manifestations and means of countering violent extremism. Siddiq further elaborated on the terrorist strategies in Pakistan based on the destruction of infrastructure and social activities, while

spreading panic, intimidation, chaos and turmoil. Siddiq presented Pakistan's National Plan of Action to counter violent extremism, which sought to achieve a number of objectives, including:

- Promoting greater interfaith harmony across denominations through education;
- Creating a favorable environment through law enforcement on extremism and terrorism;
- Realizing national consensus on counter-extremism narratives and rhetoric;
- Building peace by addressing the root causes of violence and intolerance;
- Rehabilitating and integrating returning extremist individuals, their families and victims.

In the same vein, Siddiq further showcased the impact of the National Plan of Action to counter violent extremism on security in Pakistan, following the aftermath of 2014 unrest, in which Pakistan experienced 1821 terrorist attacks, claiming 1,760 fatalities and 2,836 injuries. Surprisingly enough, the number of terrorist attacks plummeted down to 144 in 2018. Likewise, the terrorist attacks carried out in 2013 inflicted a spate of 5,552 injuries. Thanks go to Pakistan's National Plan of Action as it made injuries drop to 1914 in 2016 and to 237 over the first quarter of 2018.

Mr. Maqsood Kruse, Executive Director of the International Center for Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism (Hedayah) headquartered in the United Arab Emirates, presented his research paper "The Experience of Research Centers in Countering Violent Extremism: Hedayah as a Case Study". In his research paper, Kruse mapped out the main approaches of research centers in countering violent extremism.

In his research paper, Kruse presented the experience of Hedayah Center in countering violent extremism. Of great note, the Center carried out 149 activities in cooperation with 3000 participants coming from 100 countries. Furthermore, Kruse presented a number of innovative programs such as the Capacity Building Programs to Prevent the Youth from Extremism, the Initiative of Creative Minds for the Common Good, the Counter-Narrative E-Library, the Counter-Extremism Portal and the Global Communication Exhibition to Counter Extremism in 2014. In addition, the

Center carried out several activities and made efforts, covering various areas related to counter-terrorism such as national strategies and plans, deradicalization and reintegration, strategic communication and counter-narrative and community participation.

While showcasing the work of the Center, Kruse made a reference to a successful model best reflected by the "*Prevention of Extremism through Education in Uganda*" initiative, which has succeeded in raising the average skill and knowledge acquisition among the participants by 39.9%.

Moving ahead, Brigadier General Dr. Khalid bin Abdullah Al-Briten discussed the concept of extremism and its related synonyms, and the term of reference which Al-Briten defines in his research paper "*Countering Violent Extremism from the Perspective of Ideological Treatment*". Al-Briten further stressed that the frame of reference must go in line with the flow, development and progress of human life. Not all instances of flouting social norms, conventions and traditions are deemed extremist. Al-Briten concluded that the impact felt by the society and the individual is the criterion that decides when flouting social norms, conventions and traditions can be deemed extremist. Therefore, social acceptance is not always the criterion albeit important.

In his research paper, Al-Briten reviewed the interpretive trends of violent extremism from the ideological perspective, represented in a trend that attributes extremism to external factors such as severe global changes (political, military, wars, conflicts, global economic crises, etc.); while, another trend ascribes extremism to internal problems associated with difficult economic conditions of individuals and communities, deprivation and family and social disintegration.

Al-Briten explained that the interpretation of violent extremism offered by sociologists falls into a two-approach dichotomy: the first approach tends to associate extremism with structural imbalance within the social system which is represented by the loss of integration of the individual into the prevailing social and cultural groups, accompanied by poor mechanisms of control and rules governing the behavior of the individual (the inability of institutions to meet and accommodate the needs of individuals and groups). The second approach, however, looks into extremism as being attributable to economic, political and social conditions.