



Facilitating intra and interfaith dialogue to prevent and counter violent extremism

Venue and date: 10 June at the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations. 666 Third Avenue, 19th Floor

Time: 10:30 till 11:30 AM

Purpose: The panel addresses the potentials and pitfalls of intra and inter-faith dialogue in relation to preventing and mitigating extreme violence and terrorism. A number of issues will be addressed among others whether this type of dialogue is effective in addressing recruitment and radicalization that leads to violent extremism and what are the risk involved in intra and interfaith dialogue when addressing extreme violence. The panelists will share their experience with joined ownership and joint cooperation between religious groups and within the same religion. They will also reflect on the role of international development to support inter-faith dialogue to strengthen community resilience against extreme violence. Positive examples of collaboration with the security sector will be discussed as will the most common mistakes.

Host: Dutch PM to the UN

Sponsors and Organizers:

Human Security Collective (HSC) is a foundation based in The Hague. HSC builds capacities of civil society in engaging policy discourses and policy makers on the effects of counter-terrorism measures on civil society's political and operational space. HSC is driven by the notion that security is too important to be left in the hands of states and military only. Since its inception, it has facilitated linkages between local communities and policymakers at the regional and international levels, and strengthened its engagements with the UN and EU to advocate for a human security approach to counter-terrorism, centering on the needs and capabilities of people in dealing with sources of threats.

Hedayah is the International Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, established in Abu Dhabi, through the GCTF. It was established to serve as the premier international institution for training

and capacity building, dialogue, collaboration, and research to counter violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations, in support of long-term, global efforts to prevent and counter terrorism.

Panelists and Structure:

Mr. Abdi Billow from WAJIR Peace and Development Agency, Kenya

Father George Ehusani from Interfaith Activities and Partnership for Peace (IFAP), Nigeria

Father Gary Donegan, Rector of the Passionist Community in Holy Cross, Ardoyne, Northern Ireland

Moderator: Mr. Ivo Veenkamp, chief operating officer, Hedayah

Each of the panelists will give an introduction of 8 minutes followed by an interactive discussion with the audience.

Brief background:

Intra and interfaith dialogue has been used in the development community to help overcome conflict and resolve community disputes. This dialogue is facilitated by a number of groups, including civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, groups interested in peace-building and conflict resolution, women's groups, and charities. These facilitated dialogues help to overcome cultural and religious differences, expose communities to diversity and multiculturalism, promote peace and tolerance, and address faith-based conflicts in communities.

However, it is not only the development sector that has emphasized the need for intra and interfaith dialogue as a productive method for conflict resolution. There are also numerous instances where intra and interfaith dialogue have been used to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism. The UN Global Counter-terrorism Strategy (2006) calls for the promotion of "a culture of peace, justice and human development, ethnic, national and religious tolerance and respect for all religions, religious values, beliefs or cultures by establishing and encouraging, as appropriate, education and public awareness programmes involving all sectors of society" as a way to address Pillar 1, or the conditions-conducive to the spread of terrorism. Moreover, several UN organizations, such as the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Alliance of Civilizations, and the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force have been mandated to address intra and interfaith dialogue as a mechanism to help prevent and counter terrorism.¹

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Intra and interfaith dialogue alone is not sufficient to counter violent extremism. In fact, if not facilitated well, intra and interfaith dialogue has the potential to further highlight divisions between religious groups or between religions, and possibly increase tensions within a community. In order to overcome challenges of violent extremism, it is therefore important that the facilitated intra and interfaith dialogue promotes cooperation and joint ownership among different religious groups to address radicalization that leads to violent extremism.

In light of these observations, on the margins of the UN Global Counter-terrorism Strategy Review, the purpose of this proposed panel is for experts to share their practices and reflections on inter-religious dialogue as a mechanism to help prevent violent extremism, and to contribute to peaceful co-existence within and between different communities in contexts where violent groups are active. They could highlight which approach works, which approach is less successful and the reasons for failures and successes. The panel will also present best practices/examples of 1) intra and interfaith dialogue initiatives supported by the development community, and 2) collaboration between inter faith dialogue community leaders and states' security apparatus to strengthening community resilience against violent extremism.