

Executive Summary
**Conference on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist
Offenders: Good Practices & Lessons Learned**
6-9 December 2011, The Hague

Contents

I Conference Summary	2
Background of the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Initiative	2
Structure of the conference	2
Overview of discussion	2
II Key outcomes	3
Recommendations for beginning de-radicalisation programmes.....	3
Prison standards and intelligence gathering	3
Psychological counselling and aftercare	3
Religious counselling	4
Training and education.....	4
Professional profile and composition of capacity building teams	4
Potential challenges	5
III Next steps.....	5
Capacity building	5
Broadening research	5
Continued outreach.....	5
Next conference	5

I

Conference Summary

Background of the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Initiative

On 6 – 9 December 2011, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT), an NGO based in The Netherlands, hosted the Conference on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders: Good Practices & Lessons Learned. This was the second event organised by UNICRI/ICCT on the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists and the related issue of prison radicalisation. The initial event was convened by UNICRI in Lucca, Italy in May, 2011. Approximately 20 countries, a number of multilateral organisations and 30 independent experts participated in the Hague meeting.

At the outset, this initiative was focused on bringing together the relevant policymakers, practitioners and experts to share information and best practices. There was a great interest among the participants in increasing dialogue; however participants from a number of governments were eager to receive assistance in improving existing rehabilitation-disengagement programs for violent extremists or creating new ones. Based on this response, a decision was made to expand this project to include a capacity building component.

The Hague conference was a key step in transitioning from dialogue to capacity building. The primary purpose of this meeting was to identify good practices that could be used to shape the capacity building assistance that UNICRI will provide beginning in early 2012. The session considered a good practices document prepared by ICCT, which incorporated the input of experts.

Structure of the conference

The four day conference was divided into two parts. The first session, on 6-7 December, consisted of a small group of experts – primarily non-governmental – focusing on identifying good practices in rehabilitating incarcerated violent extremists as they transition back into society. Approximately 30 experts from a wide range of disciplines, including psychology, religious studies, aftercare, and corrections, among other fields, participated.

The second session, on December 8-9, included a broader participation of individual experts, and participants from – amongst others – Jordan, Algeria, Morocco, Kenya, Canada, Denmark, Australia, Mauritania, Singapore, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Kingdom, Spain, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Norway, Turkey and Sweden. A number of international organisations, including the European Union, UN agencies such as the UN's Counterterrorism Executive Directorate and al Qaeda/Taliban Monitoring Team, NATO, the OSCE and various NGOs. The private sector was also present with the non-profit think tank "Google Ideas."

Overview of discussion

The meeting addressed several issues including: how various professionals such as psychologists, social workers and religious scholars should be most effectively integrated into a rehabilitation programme; how law enforcement and intelligence agents can collect information from detainees without undermining the rehabilitation process; the importance of a robust aftercare programme; how to best involve other key stakeholders in this process, such as victims and former extremists; what good correctional practices should encompass; how to prevent inmates from continuing terrorist activities while incarcerated; and steps countries can take to prevent radicalisation from taking hold in prison.

Based on the significant progress that was made in identifying good practices, ICCT has finalised the good practices document and formally submitted it to UNICRI. While the document and the discussion in The

Hague were far reaching and comprehensive, a few of the themes are worth highlighting. One of the most important points that emerged during the expert session was that a “one size fits all” approach will not be effective, and that rehabilitation programmes must be tailored to individual country conditions and cultures. There are, nonetheless, a series of good practices that should be considered. For example, it was widely agreed that rehabilitation programmes have the best chance of succeeding when they are nested in a safe, secure and well operating custodial setting. As a result, good prison standards and practices must be the starting point for building an effective rehabilitation or counterradicalisation programme. Improving the prison environment can also help prevent inmates from becoming radicalised while in custody. Another theme that emerged was that the key to success in deradicalisation/ disengagement is building strong trust between the individuals working in rehabilitation programmes and the detainees. It is only once this type of bond is established that the inmates will be receptive to the counter-messages that the rehabilitation professionals are attempting to share. Finally, the experts agreed that rehabilitation and reintegration is a complex field and it is important to have a cross-disciplinary team involved – both in developing good practices and in any subsequent capacity building that UNICRI offers.

II Key outcomes

Recommendations for beginning de-radicalisation programmes

Clear goals need to be determined from the outset: What is a successful rehabilitation programme? All participants agreed that there was no “one size fits all” approach. Practitioners should acknowledge the many levels and complexities of de-radicalisation programmes. Programmes should be flexible and take into account the wider international context, local context of the terrorist act and individual psychology and personality of the inmate.

Experience has shown that programmes are more likely to succeed when there is a strong national ownership. It is also important to bear in mind that rehabilitation/de-radicalisation will not be possible for all prisoners.

Prison standards and intelligence gathering

Prison standards and fair treatment of prisoners were deemed essential elements of successful de-radicalisation/ rehabilitation programmes. The [1957 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners](#) provide the baseline of compliance. Torture and inhuman treatment are illegal and can further deepen political grievances and serve to justify extremist ideologies. In fact, compliance with UN Standards and Norms, fair and equal treatment should be maintained throughout the entire judicial process, as well as in prison setting.

Some participants considered how intelligence gathering and surveillance in prisons should be done in observance of professional and ethical standards, without infringement of basic human rights.

Psychological counselling and aftercare

When implementing de-radicalisation or rehabilitation programs it is crucial to understand the behaviour and attitudes of the programme’s subjects. Psychological understanding was found to be necessary. There is also a need to understand inmates’ behaviour. There is a need to recognise the reasoning behind terrorist acts. Furthermore, in order for rehabilitation to work, the inmate should demonstrate a willingness and motivation to change.

Aftercare is of critical importance. Programmes should not stop on release. After care programmes could be made compulsory upon release but after a period should be attended voluntarily. Families of inmates and communities should be involved in after-care programmes where possible. Practitioners should be aware that the prisoner may be stigmatised in the community upon release. Including family and community members in the aftercare programme may help to lessen this situation.

Religious counselling¹

When undertaking religious counselling, “chaplains” should be specially trained. Criteria for successful counsellors may include the following:

- They should be fair and have the ability to earn the trust of the prisoners;
- They should have in depth religious knowledge;
- They should be someone who represents/ embodies the religion itself, when religion is one of the elements involved in the motivation of the prisoner for the committed offence;
- They need to know and understand the political situation and the concept of justice;
- They should be empathetic: have respect for the detainee and understand how to approach them;
- They should have a strong personal character and the ability to withstand criticism and disapproval.

It was noted that it was difficult to recruit religious counsellors as many do not want to engage in these programs. They should not be coerced. Many can face stigmatisation for participating in these programmes. They need to be chosen with care. When choosing councillors practitioners should bear in mind that the detainee may have specific prejudices, whether gender based or ethnic e.g. if a male detainee will accept counselling from a female counsellor.

In general psychological counselling should go hand in hand with religious counselling – *if* the prisoner is religiously motivated. Both forms of counselling should complement each other and counsellors should cooperate.

Training and education

Training and education were overwhelmingly deemed important, necessary elements of rehabilitation. Training/educational/vocational programmes have proved to be helpful in Camp Bucca Iraq for instance. Such programmes however should be country specific and tailored towards the individual’s need - not “one size fits all”.

Professional profile and composition of capacity building teams

There was a wide definition of those who would be suitable to conduct rehabilitation programmes. The team should include a wide range of skill sets. Although not the most efficient way, personal recommendations can be a good starting point. Some important skill sets and personality types were highlighted:

Required Skills	
• Psychologists	• Teachers
• Sociologists	• Aftercare experts
• Anthropologists	• Correctional experts
• Chaplains	• Community leaders
• Intelligence experts	• Linguists
• Criminal justice experts	• Other social scientists

¹ It should be noted that much of the discussion related to religious counselling was based on the experience of Islamic counselling programmes.

Personality type
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilient, can withstand stigmatisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathetic and respectful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of local and international context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unbiased

Potential challenges

Participants acknowledged overwhelmingly that the cost of rehabilitation/de-radicalisation programmes can be substantial. Spending on programmes can often be unpopular domestically as well. It is difficult to justify prisoner rehabilitation when there are cuts in health/social welfare programmes. Further challenges include that demand for programmes can often outweigh capacity available in many cases. There may be large numbers of persons to be rehabilitated. Finally, there may be public pressure to release political prisoners quickly.

III Next steps

Capacity building

UNICRI will be able to offer assistance to countries who are interested in addressing any or all of the full range of issues relating to violent radicalisation in their prisons. This assistance is designed to help countries build a rehabilitation program for violent extremists, to make improvements to an existing program, or more generally to take steps to prevent their prisons from becoming hotbeds of radicalisation. Interested countries will be able to contact UNICRI to seek assistance and work with the requesting country to determine how this request can best be fulfilled. To carry out this capacity building, UNICRI is establishing a cross-disciplinary and multi-national roster of experts, which they can draw on to deliver assistance. Several countries have already requested assistance to UNICRI. The Institute will meet with them to discuss how they can help once the capacity building programme is launched in early 2012.

Broadening research

As part of the expanded UNICRI/ICCT initiative, a research component will be added to this project. Participants at the conference emphasised that this is a field where too little research has been done, and where in many cases the research appears to be lagging behind. In particular, there has not been adequate research to measure the effectiveness of these rehabilitation efforts for violent extremists, and determining which aspects of these programs are working. At some point in 2012, UNICRI will begin soliciting research proposals from academics, field researchers and other experts to fill this gap.

Continued outreach

UNICRI will enhance its outreach acting in the next few months, both to further raise awareness of the initiative among Member States and to encourage their active participation in this project.

Next conference

With the capacity building component of the initiative moving forward, and a number of themes still to be explored, the next conference of the UNICRI/ICCT Rehabilitation and Reintegration Initiative will be held in Doha, Qatar, 8-10 May 2012. More information will be available early March.