

Different Roles of Women in Countering Violent Extremism

Project Description
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Background

Women play a number of different roles in both the prevention of violent extremism and perpetration of terrorism. Women can play critical roles in developing responses to violence and terrorism, and challenging and delegitimizing extremist narratives. Women can be powerful agents of change, and can even play a crucial role both in detecting early signs of radicalization and intervening before individuals become violent. The traditional roles ascribed to women in many societies, such as wife, mother, and nurturer, empower them in some instances to challenge extremist narratives and shape the home, education, and social environments to make extremism and violence a less desirable option. Moreover, as United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 notes, women are disproportionately affected by violence during conflict, and have in many places played important roles in efforts to prevent and mitigate conflict and violence, and rebuild the resilience of affected communities.



Photo Credit: Hedayah

However, women can also play important roles in promoting ideologies and groups that fuel terrorist violence. From research, personal testimonies, and community feedback, it is clear that women can also sympathize with and help mobilize support for violent extremist groups, and even willingly join terrorist organizations and carry out attacks. For example, women have joined violent movements in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Colombia, and Peru, as well as violent extremist groups such as al-Qaida and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Moreover, the current wave of recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters has demonstrated the multiplying force of social media which has also been used to both prompt women to support and join these groups, but also to mobilize against them.

Understanding these varied roles of women is critical to developing more nuanced and targeted efforts to counter violent extremism and prevent terrorism.

About this Project

To further explore these issues, the Global Center on Cooperative Security and Hedayah (the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism) are jointly developing and producing a publication, in the form of an edited volume, intended to offer an innovative set of perspectives reflecting on the roles of women in terrorism and countering violent extremism (CVE). Contributors from a wide range of regions have been

invited to reflect on the lessons learned from diverse fields of practice, including development, human rights, media and advocacy, academia, and conflict prevention and mitigation, and consider their application to CVE efforts. Introductory and concluding chapters, co-authored by the Global Center and Hedayah, will include a discussion on the emergence and evolution of CVE as a field of practice and the focus on women as well as implications for future CVE policy and research. The analysis will draw on a series of workshops and discussions convened by the Global Center and Hedayah over the past two years, relevant UN resolutions, and framework documents of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), as well as in-depth interviews by the editors with policymakers, practitioners, and experts in the field of CVE and related areas of work. It is anticipated that the publication will be available in late summer 2015.

About the Global Center on Cooperative Security

The Global Center works with governments, international organizations, and civil society to develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable responses to complex international security challenges through collaborative policy research, context-sensitive programming, and capacity development. In collaboration with a global network of expert practitioners and partner organizations, the Global Center fosters stronger multilateral partnerships and convenes key stakeholders to support integrated and inclusive security policies across national, regional, and global levels.

About Hedayah

Hedayah is the International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism, and was established in Abu Dhabi in December 2012 at the Third GCTF Ministerial Meeting. Hedayah's mission is to serve as the premier international institution for training and capacity building, dialogue and collaboration, and research and analysis to counter violent extremism in all of its forms. Hedayah focuses on the preventive, proactive approaches that support of long-term, global efforts to build community resilience to violent extremism.

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