

# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TERRORIST REHABILITATION AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

26 - 27 March 2013

Stamford Ballroom,

Raffles City Convention Centre, Singapore



RELIGIOUS  
REHABILITATION  
GROUP



S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL  
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
A Graduate School of Nanyang Technological University

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REPORT ON A CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY

THE RELIGIOUS REHABILITATION GROUP AND THE S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF  
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY, SINGAPORE

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*This report summarises the proceedings of the conference as interpreted by the assigned rapporteurs and editors of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this report.*

*This conference adheres to a variation of the Chatham House Rule. Accordingly, beyond the speakers and paper presenters cited, no other attributions have been included in this report.*

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*26 - 27 March 2013, Singapore*

## Background and Aims of the Conference



*Participants at the International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience included local and foreign speakers, participants and invited guests.*

The International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience was organised by the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). The conference was held in conjunction with the 10th anniversary of the RRG, a voluntary group of Islamic scholars and teachers formed in 2003 to assist in counselling and rehabilitating detained members of regional terrorist groups.

The two-day event brought together 26 distinguished local and foreign speakers and 500

participants and invited guests. The Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Hsien Loong, graced this event as the Guest-of-Honour and delivered the keynote address.

The conference aimed to create a platform for discussion of new issues and developments related to terrorist rehabilitation, as well as to explore ways and means of strengthening the global community's resilience to the influence of terrorist ideology and propaganda. The conference also provided a crucial network for governments and institutions working on these issues.

## WELCOME REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR BARRY DESKER, DEAN OF THE S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY



*Ambassador Barry Desker*

*Dean, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore*

Good morning Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome you to the International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience, which is jointly organised by the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). This conference marks a milestone for the RRG, as it celebrates its 10th anniversary. The RRG is a grassroots organisation which was formed in 2003 by a voluntary group of Islamic scholars and teachers to assist in counselling and rehabilitating detained members of regional terrorist groups.

Over the past few years, there is no doubt that many excellent developments have taken place in the field of counter-terrorism. Most notably, we see a gradual shift in the approach which many countries have taken towards tackling terrorism. Many nations now include non-kinetic strategies in their counter-terrorism programmes, recognising that soft power, while more time-consuming,

may be more effective in changing the hearts and minds of terrorists and extremists in the long run. Perhaps, the greatest challenge in using subtle, non-coercive means for combating terrorism is that it receives far less attention than that given to kinetic operations in which the capture of high-value targets attracts headlines and engenders popular support. Strategies that derive from non-kinetic approaches, such as institution-building, psychological operations, information operations and rehabilitation, are more subtle and take a longer time for the effects to manifest. Despite the challenges, non-kinetic approaches to counter-terrorism are increasingly occupying centre stage because counter-terrorism practitioners and governments have come to realise that counter-terrorism is context dependent and requires the use of both kinetic and non-kinetic approaches. Today, terrorist rehabilitation, community engagement, and more recently, community resilience, have carved their own niches within the domain of non-kinetic approaches.

In Singapore, the synergistic relationship between

RRG and RSIS is another new dimension to this development. The relationship ensures the sharing of research findings and practices in real time between the two organisations. This conference, in a way, is also a testament to this commitment.

RSIS through its constituent centre, the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), has worked steadfastly with the RRG since its formation in April 2003. Together, they have been recognised as models for strategic efforts to mitigate the ever increasing threat of radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. Currently, RSIS has six members of the RRG working at the Centre as staff. The addition of RRG members into RSIS has provided a unique dimension to ongoing research and capacity building efforts. A majority of the RRG members are religious scholars and clerics in disciplines that include Islamic jurisprudence and philosophy. Having counselled numerous detainees, they are able to provide valuable insights on the terrorist threat. The synergy between RRG and RSIS can be seen in three broad areas - synergy in research, outreach and partnership.

To reduce the threat of terrorism at a strategic level, RSIS sought to formulate appropriate responses to challenge radical ideas and to mitigate their effects on society. Ideological indoctrination spawns and sustains extremism and terrorism. This requires accurate responses through successful mapping and understanding of terrorist ideology. The lack of research into the area of terrorist ideology saw the genesis of the Ideological Response Unit at ICPVTR in September 2003. Built on the dual synergy of religious knowledge and research into the field of terrorist ideology, this strategic and enduring partnership has evolved from cooperation to collaboration over the past decade. RSIS' research into the domain of terrorist and extremist ideology has grown as a result of the dedicated contribution of clerics at the Centre. Additional clerics from the RRG domain were sought in light of the numerous forays undertaken in this unique research environment.

The expertise of the RRG has always been at hand in providing the correct interpretations of religious texts that are misused by extremists and terrorists to further their propaganda and political agenda. Mapping the ideology of terrorist and extremist groups also aids in understanding issues

involving the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, and the establishment of Islamic states. The expertise of the RRG and clerics at RSIS lends credence to the research undertaken to counter terrorist and extremist ideology. Counter narratives are then disseminated among the wider community through appropriate channels.

In February 2009, RSIS and the RRG organised the inaugural International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation. It was at this conference that the website P4Peace was launched. The web portal [www.p4peace.com](http://www.p4peace.com) aims to counter terrorism and terrorist ideologies by promoting peace and tolerance. The success of Singapore's deradicalisation programme quickly attracted global interest.

Over the past 4 years, this synergy in outreach has occurred beyond the shores of Singapore especially in the areas of terrorist rehabilitation and community engagement. The foundation of Iraq's religious rehabilitation programme, for instance, was partly based on knowledge gained from ICPVTR. RSIS is actively involved in capacity building projects focused on terrorist rehabilitation and community engagement strategies internationally. Field visits and programmes were conducted in several countries including the Philippines, Indonesia, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Libya and Saudi Arabia. These enabled both counter-terrorism scholars and the religious clerics to better understand rehabilitation efforts, identify best practices undertaken by countries and to assist in rehabilitation efforts in these countries based on their ongoing research in this domain. The synergy is based on the sharing of knowledge by RRG members who are staff at ICPVTR and work alongside counter-terrorism scholars to make terrorist rehabilitation a global imperative.

RSIS supports community initiatives and promotes programmes that educate communities about extremism. As part of ICPVTR's community engagement and outreach efforts to educational institutions and grassroots organisations, the Centre reaches out to students and educators in various schools, and grassroots personnel on issues related to terrorism and counter-terrorism measures. In September 2011, RSIS organised the inaugural International Conference on Community Engagement. The participants explored best practices at reaching out to the community

and to counter terrorist and extremist ideology. Lessons from the RRG and Singapore's whole-of-government approach to community engagement are often highlighted as strategic counter-terrorism measures that can be undertaken by governments and societies.

This conference aims to create a platform for discussions on new issues and developments relating to terrorist rehabilitation, as well as to explore ways and means of strengthening the global community's resilience to the influence of terrorist ideology and propaganda. It also functions as a crucial network for governments and institutions working on these issues.

I am especially pleased to note that this two-day conference brings together 26 distinguished local and foreign speakers and an estimated 500 participants and invited guests. With such a magnificent group of participants of distinction

and wisdom, I am confident the conference will be able to pioneer yet another breakthrough for non-kinetic responses to counter-terrorism in general, and more specifically, to terrorist rehabilitation and community resilience.

Your participation, enthusiasm and expertise will also see to it that a lasting and favourable impression will be created in the research on terrorist rehabilitation and community resilience. I trust you will find the discussions thought-provoking, and will integrate the knowledge and insights gained from this conference into the exceptional counter-terrorism work all of you are currently involved in and a part of.

Let me take this opportunity to wish you all a productive and enriching conference.

Thank you.

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY USTAZ ALI Mohamad,  
CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE RELIGIOUS REHABILITATION GROUP**



*Ustaz Ali Haji Mohamad  
Co-Chairman, Religious Rehabilitation Group, Singapore*

Ambassador Barry Desker, Dean of RSIS; Sahibus Samaha, Dr Mohamad Fatris Bakaram, Mufti of Singapore; Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi Hassan, RRG Co-Chairman; Respected Asatizah; Distinguished Speakers and Guests; Friends; Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum and a very good morning to everyone.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome everyone to the International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience 2013. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG). To commemorate this significant milestone, we have organised this conference together with our friends the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

I am truly honoured that all of you are able to join us for this conference and commemoration. We are grateful to you for accepting our invitation and

agreeing to be part of this memorable occasion. Many of you are dear friends we have made over the years and we hope to make new friends over the next two days of this conference.

It is without doubt that the events of September 11 and the arrest of members of the Jemaah Islamiyah or JI terrorist network in Singapore in late 2001 surprised the nation here. The plans of the JI prompted us to ask the question 'what went wrong' with the Muslims who had been misled onto this terrorist or militant path. Various thoughts crossed our minds. Is it really true that they are capable of such appalling acts? What were the reasons and motivations behind their actions?

We were honoured that the Singapore government confided in several of us who are religious teachers and shared the results of their investigations and concerns about the threat of terrorism. We were given the opportunity to talk to the JI detainees, explore their thinking and reasoning and most importantly learn the motivations that led them to take the militant path. After several meetings with

the detainees, we believed that something had to be done to address the ideological threat. This motivated us to form the Religious Rehabilitation Group or RRG in 2003.

The RRG was formed by a group of religious teachers with the main objective of counselling JI members who had been misled by JI's ideology. It is a voluntary organisation committed to the cause of rehabilitation for the JI detainees during and after their detention. Beyond that, the RRG seeks to engage the community in counter-ideological initiatives.

We are fortunate that the Singapore government is willing to empower the community to become partners in handling the problem, and not take the issue of terrorism as a security threat to be resolved by using the law and taking security action alone. This willingness has allowed the RRG to take ownership of the problem, tackle it from the religious perspective, and most importantly contribute towards maintaining national security.

The early years of the RRG were very challenging. We were new to the area of terrorist rehabilitation, and there was a lack of a suitable model for us to follow in Singapore. Based on the findings of our initial interviews with the detainees and research that we conducted, we developed our own model of rehabilitation programme.

One of the many challenges we faced at that time was the need to approach our fellow religious teachers to volunteer to the cause. We are grateful that our fellow *asatizah* came forward with courage and enthusiasm. We then set out to equip ourselves with the necessary knowledge to understand the root of the problem. Based on our research and interviews, we developed two manuals that helped us in our counselling sessions.

Our primary aim was to provide religious counselling to the JI detainees. From counselling the JI detainees and their family members, we have now expanded to include counselling self-radicalised individuals who come from different backgrounds. Besides correcting their misunderstanding of religious concepts and sources, our counsellors also face a daunting task of upholding the quality of the counselling sessions. Issues in counselling have also evolved

from specific ideological concepts, to various day-to-day realities, including issues that relate to matters at a more general level.

As religious teachers, RRG members understand the dangers of JI's ideological threat and the need for effective religious counselling. However, there are many challenges faced by the counsellors. These include:

- Keeping up to date with current ideological issues;
- Preparing intellectual content and counter-narratives to refute radical ideas and address grievances;
- Engaging with 'difficult' detainees;
- Continuously upgrading our knowledge and skills; and
- Managing our time as volunteers.

In the last decade, we have developed two counselling manuals, published numerous articles and set up our website. In 2008, we published our first book to commemorate our fifth anniversary.

Today, I am pleased to announce that we will be launching our 10th anniversary commemorative book. I would like to take this opportunity to thank fellow RRG members and the community for the strong support they have given to our effort all these years.

We are also pleased to learn that the Singapore model of religious rehabilitation has received international recognition. We are honoured that RRG members have been invited to several countries to share their rehabilitation approach and experiences. The recognition and endorsements we have received are encouraging as they validate the efforts of the RRG and indicate that we are on the right track.

Although 10 years have passed, we are aware that the threats of terrorism and extremism have not faded away. The ideological threat continues to prevail especially with the advancement of technology. The Internet today has become the main medium for the spread of extremist ideas. Cyberspace is shaping up to be the new battleground for hearts and minds. Terrorists are increasingly exploiting the Internet as a tool for mass communication and radicalisation.

In recent years, social networking sites have also attracted the attention of security and law enforcement agencies because of extremists' exploitation of these platforms to further their cause. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and MySpace have become very popular as they have a global reach. They provide space for exchanging messages and fostering online communities with common interests and agendas. RRG believes that one of our greatest challenges today is to deal with and counter the pervasive spread of terrorist ideologies and extremist views online.

One next big challenge is to continuously develop counter narratives to terrorist ideologies. Terrorist ideologues are still spreading their ideology of hate and violence with vigour, attracting vulnerable people all over the world to their cause. They are constantly repackaging their narratives to circumvent counter-arguments.

Those who have undergone religious counselling can still be drawn to terrorist propaganda and into the path of radicalism if they are not careful. As seen in the re-arrest of a Singaporean ex-detainee last year. It does not matter whether they had been self-radicalised or were part of a terrorist group previously. We must continue to push on in our efforts to counsel and rehabilitate them.

We are very keen to learn as much as we can from this conference and intend to look into developing several rehabilitation approaches to increase the effectiveness of our rehabilitation programme.

Due to the appeal of the Internet especially to the youth, the RRG believes that counter-ideology messages need to be packaged so that it has mass appeal. Thereafter, there must be intensive and sustained efforts to reach out to the community through public forums and online media.

We need to continuously debunk ideas that preach segregation, hatred and violence, and replace them with messages of peace, tolerance, and mutual understanding and respect that Islam propagates. This will help us safeguard our social harmony which underpins our survival as a nation.

The RRG's future lies in the hands of our younger generation of religious teachers. As terrorism and religious extremism are here for many years to come, our youth and younger *asatizah* must take

the lead and continue the efforts based on the foundation that the RRG has built. I believe our younger *asatizah* have the ability and capacity to bring the RRG into the next lap, with their zest for continuous learning and sincere dedication to serve the community.

I believe that this conference will provide a good platform for RRG members to learn from international experts. With the wide array of distinguished speakers, we certainly believe this learning journey will provide us with greater knowledge and understanding of terrorist rehabilitation and community resilience.

Once again, I express my gratitude, on behalf of the organisers to all speakers and participants for joining us in this conference. We look forward to hear the important lessons, valuable experiences and exciting ideas that the speakers will be presenting in their papers. We also hope and look forward to an insightful and stimulating two days of discussions and interactions.

Thank you and wassalamualaikum.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG



*Mr Lee Hsien Loong  
Prime Minister of Singapore*

Mr Eddie Teo, Chairman, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS); Mr Barry Desker, Dean of RSIS; Ustaz Ali Mohamad and Ustaz Mohd Hasbi Hassan, Co-Chairmen of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG); DPM Teo Chee Hean; Mr S R Nathan and Mr Wong Kan Seng; Ministers; Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to join you at the International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience, organised by the RRG and the RSIS.

### **Religious Rehabilitation Group**

This Conference also marks the 10th anniversary of the RRG. The RRG has played an invaluable role in keeping Singapore safe from terrorism. The idea for the RRG arose after we arrested members of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Singapore in December 2001. We realised from our investigations that just arresting the JI members was not enough. JI members had misinterpreted key Islamic concepts, and convinced themselves that terrorism was “righteous” and “legitimate”.

We needed to counter, at source, this radical and wrong-headed misinterpretation of Islam. We had to offer convincing alternative interpretations of key doctrines central to this ideology. We also needed an effective rehabilitation programme and support structure to help those who had got involved with terrorism integrate back into society after their release.

Several respected religious scholars and teachers volunteered to work with the Government on this important challenge. It was a brave move. At the time, this was an experimental approach to religious rehabilitation. No one could foresee how it would pan out. The ulamas took a leap of faith, and took the risk of being seen as lackeys of the Government. They were convinced this was the right thing to do, and necessary to arrest the spread of religious extremism. They subsequently became the founding members of the RRG in 2003. The RRG set to work to counsel and rehabilitate the JI detainees. They identified core Islamic doctrines that had been misinterpreted, and developed religious texts to counter them. Their

first publication (“Islam – Religion of Peace and Salutation – the Path Towards Enlivening the True Jihad”) refuted the JI’s mistaken definition of jihad as “war” and as a “religious obligation” for all Muslims. Its second manual dealt with other religious concepts that had been distorted by terrorist ideologues, like *Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’* (love for Muslims and hatred for non-Muslims) and *takfir* (declaration of apostasy).

Over the years, RRG counsellors have helped terrorism-related detainees understand how they had been misguided by the radical ideologues. Every terrorism-related detainee in Singapore who has been released from detention has undergone counselling as part of his rehabilitation. Most have since settled back with their families, found jobs and integrated back into Singapore society. Several are still adjusting, and continue to be counselled by the RRG. A few hardcore elements remain in detention and will be counselled when they are receptive.

Beyond the JI group, the RRG has also counselled other terrorism-related detainees like MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) members and self-radicalised individuals. It also educates the wider community on the dangers of terrorist misinterpretations through public talks, its website and its Facebook page. These efforts sensitise the public to the terrorist threat, and strengthen our immunity to extremist views in the broader community.

The RRG has fulfilled our hopes, though its mission continues. I thank all RRG members for their tremendous contributions. Special thanks go to Ustaz Ali and Ustaz Hasbi, who have co-chaired the RRG since its inception. They steered the RRG through uncharted waters, and established a strong foundation for its continued success. My appreciation also goes to pioneer members like Ustaz Ibrahim Kassim and Ustaz Mohamad Rais, who are still volunteering in the RRG.

Over the last decade, several respected asatizah who were involved in the RRG Resource Panel or served as RRG counsellors have sadly passed on, such as Ustaz Ahmad Sonhadji Mohamad, Ustaz Syed Ahmad Muhammad Semait and Ustaz Hassan Mustakim. They and their contributions will always be remembered.

I also wish to thank Mr Wong Kan Seng who was the Minister for Home Affairs when the RRG was formed. He gave the RRG his fullest support, and backed it up with all the resources of the Government. I am glad that Mr Wong is here to celebrate this occasion with us.

The RRG’s journey is comprehensively recorded in its 10th anniversary commemorative book. I hope you will enjoy reading this informative and inspiring publication.

### ***Continuing Threat of Terrorism***

In the broader fight against extremist terrorism, the world has also made much progress. Many Al-Qaeda (AQ) leaders have been neutralised, including Osama bin Laden himself. AQ’s ability to mount major operations has been diminished. In Southeast Asia, many JI leaders and operatives have also been neutralised. For example, master bomb-makers Noordin Mohammad Top and Azahari Husin have been killed, while Operations Chief Hambali and former spiritual leader Abu Bakar Bashir have been arrested.

However, extremist terrorism remains a real and potent challenge. While JI’s organisation has been disrupted, the underlying structures supporting terrorism in our region are still in place. Some pesantrens continue to propagate radical ideology. Training camps still exist, such as the one uncovered in Poso in Central Sulawesi last November. In parts of some countries, separatist struggles have created lawless conditions where extremist terrorists can establish training camps and safe havens.

On the wider scene, AQ still wields considerable ideological influence in many countries, including in Africa and Asia. It is adept at opportunistically exploiting local political developments to win over new sympathisers. For example, AQ is taking advantage of the civil war in Syria. AQ’s current leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri has called for jihadists to join the fight against Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. Two Malaysians who likely responded to his call were caught in Lebanon trying to join the rebel troops in Syria.

The terrorism threat has also morphed, posing greater challenges to security agencies. Terrorist splinter groups like the Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabaab in Somalia have multiplied. These

groups exploit extremist sentiments or profess allegiance with AQ even when their objectives differ. Their fragmented, nebulous nature makes them harder to pin down and neutralise.

Self-radicalisation is a growing phenomenon. The Internet makes it easy for a person to immerse himself in narrow or extremist groups online. Jihadist sites and sermons by charismatic radical ideologues are just a mouse click away. A person can become radicalised after repeated exposure. This is true of all sorts of radical and fringe groups, and not only radical jihadists. Singaporeans are not immune to this danger; several Singaporeans have been radicalised by terrorist ideology through the Internet.

Fortunately, Singapore has not suffered a terrorist attack in recent years. Credit must go to our Home Team for keeping Singapore safe, and the RRG for countering the wrong-headed ideologies that motivate the terrorists. But the threat has not disappeared, and we remain a target. From time to time, we hear reports of terrorists in our region wanting to attack Singapore or Singapore assets in our neighbourhood. We must never let our guard down.

## ***The Road Ahead***

What can we do about the terrorist threat?

### ***Deepen Communal Trust***

First, we must strengthen trust between our ethnic groups. Trust is the foundation for any society, especially a multi-religious, multi-racial one like ours. It underpins our social interactions, and helps build resilience so that people will come together and help one another should attacks occur.

We regard terrorism as a national threat that endangers all Singaporeans, not just specific communities. Terrorist attacks not only damage physical infrastructure; they can also destroy the social fabric that binds societies together. We have seen this happen in many countries, where attacks have heightened suspicion between communities, or caused outright hostility against minorities or new arrivals.

Singapore has experienced first-hand damaging racial conflicts, more than once. We have therefore worked hard to build communal trust by enshrining racial harmony as one of our key values, and ensuring all races progress with the nation. But trust must be continually sustained

and nurtured. That is why our first priority after uncovering the JI network was to explain the facts of the case to community leaders and the public, so as to dispel misapprehensions and fears, and make sure that our communities would stand with one another. We established the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles and launched the Community Engagement Programme, to build trust and resilience should crises occur.

### ***Enhance Operational Capabilities***

Beyond building trust, we must also build strong operational capabilities. We cannot afford to assume that no terrorist threat will materialise. We need to be able to pick up intelligence leads, pursue them thoroughly, and nip emerging threats in the bud. Keeping Singapore safe is a constant cat-and-mouse game, as terrorist organisations become more sophisticated.

Good operational capabilities require people, organisation and networks. We need intelligence officers to pick up on suspicious activities, IT analysts to track terrorist activities online, and financial experts to follow the money trail. We need an organisation which can piece together the story in time, and act on it decisively.

Of course, successful counter-terrorism operations also depend on the trust of the community. It is not possible to deploy officers or surveillance equipment everywhere. The community is a far more effective early warning system, provided it trusts the government and the security agencies, and is willing to cooperate with them. It was in fact information volunteered by a local Muslim that alerted the authorities to the existence of the JI in Singapore. This was how the Government could thwart the terrorists' suicide bombing plots, unravel the Singapore JI cell, and thereafter disrupt the regional JI network. We must never lose this important operational capability.

### ***Strengthen International Cooperation***

Finally, we need close international security cooperation. Terrorism is a global threat, and terrorist groups do not respect international borders. Therefore counter-terrorism forces must also collaborate internationally. Developments abroad can have serious implications at home. Conversely, timely sharing of intelligence on terrorist suspects can disrupt terrorist plans and operations in other countries, making the world a safer place for everyone.

In Southeast Asia, countries shared information on the JI network, leading to the arrest of hundreds of JI members and associates across the region. Such close security cooperation also led to the capture and repatriation of Singapore JI fugitives who had fled overseas to avoid arrest.

International cooperation also includes sharing experiences at conferences like these. Singapore is happy to share our experiences where useful, and learn from countries like Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Indonesia and Malaysia which have significant experience in terrorist rehabilitation. Our individual circumstances may vary, but we share

a common responsibility to keep our people safe from terrorists. I hope that you will make use of the Conference to interact with one another, and build new friendships.

## **Conclusion**

Terrorism is a scourge against humanity. While great progress has been made combating terrorism, the threat has by no means disappeared. Let us remain vigilant and strengthen our defences against terrorism, and work together to keep our people safe for many more years. I wish you all a fruitful Conference!

**PANEL 1**  
**THE STATE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM, REHABILITATION AND**  
**COMMUNITY COUNTER-IDEOLOGY EFFORTS**

**PANELISTS**

**Brigadier General (Retired) Russell D. Howard**, President of Howard's Global Solutions, Director of Monterey Terrorism Research and Education Program and Adjunct Professor, Monterey Institute of International Studies, USA

**Professor Rohan Gunaratna**, Professor of Security Studies and Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore



*Panel 1: Brigadier General (Retired) Russell D. Howard (left) and Professor Rohan Gunaratna (right)*

## AN UPDATE ON THE GLOBAL TERRORISM LANDSCAPE

Brigadier General (Retired) Russell D. Howard



*Brigadier General (Retired) Russell D. Howard  
President of Howard's Global Solutions, Director of Monterey Terrorism Research and Education Program  
and Adjunct Professor at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, USA*

General Russell D. Howard discussed near-term, mid-term and future security threats, focusing on the current global threat environment.

### **Near-Term Threats**

In contrast to the view that Al-Qaeda is increasingly defunct and in disarray, General Howard believes that Al-Qaeda is not on the run, but on the rise. In fact, Al-Qaeda and its surrogates are operating all over the world – in West and North Africa, and in Asia. He compared these associated groups to McDonald's franchise, in that they have the ability to adapt the same aims and ideology to changing circumstances and local conditions in different countries. He considered groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Qaeda on the Arabic Peninsula (AQAP), Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram as part of Al-Qaeda franchise operations.

General Howard detailed several factors which could cause the Al-Qaeda franchise to fail, namely undercapitalisation, loss of market share, a reduction of defined territory and training

support, loss of competent workforce and reduced brand loyalty. Since rehabilitation and other non-lethal counter-terrorism initiatives are targeted at deradicalising terrorists and countering extremist ideology, they are integral in the fight against the terrorist franchise.

### **Mid-Term Threats**

General Howard then turned his focus to emerging global threats, where he discussed the imminent threat of cyber terrorism. Though cyber terrorists presently do not seem to be ideologically driven, nor have they inflicted physical harm upon the civilian population yet, he believed that it would become an increasing threat in the coming decade. General Howard referred to incidents of anonymous online hacking groups infiltrating government websites, and contrasted it to governments suspected of perpetrating similar acts of cyber terrorism. While he offered no solution for the latter, he suggested converting the hackers into "counter hackers" by offering them amnesty and hiring them to work against other hackers instead.

Another mid-term threat General Howard identified was the development of a nexus between terrorists and traffickers. Despite the differences in motivation and targets between the two parties, he opined that both parties were increasingly benefiting from each other's specialised knowledge. Traffickers, be it those trafficking humans, weapons or drugs, are able to expose the seams in our law enforcement and seize upon them. This knowledge is extremely important to terrorists, especially those seeking to partake in global operations. He cited as an example of traffickers in Mexico who have adopted tactics that bear the hallmarks of terrorism, such as the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), particularly car bombings.

### **Long-Term Threats**

In the long run, General Howard said that demographic issues and lack of resources, particularly water, could trigger a new global terrorist threat. Environmental problems such as climate change and resource competition are made more acute by increasing global populations, and this will have long-term security implications. Drawing on the example of Lake Chad in Africa, he illustrated how the growing local population placed strains on the water supply and in turn, those whose livelihoods depended on it. This eventually forced new generations of unemployed youth to turn to trafficking and terrorism.

The demographic problems General Howard foresaw included both growing youth and elderly populations in different parts of the world. There would either be insufficient jobs for the youth in the global south, or an excess of social security burdens for those in the global north. For instance, in some countries, more than 60% of the population is under the age of 29. In such a situation, what could the "youth bulge" be expected to do without jobs? Likewise, if the elderly population grossly outnumbers the youth population, that would pose a huge burden on the finances of the youth. General Howard suggested that terrorism might become a channel for their grievances if governments fail to alleviate the situation.

In conclusion, General Howard highlighted that terrorism is not an "ism" like socialism, communism and capitalism – meaning that it is not an ideology that one adopts. Instead, it is a tactic used by a weaker power against a greater power to achieve a strategic objective, one that is not limited to extremists, insurgents, or states. As such, any non-state actor can use terrorism as a tactic to further strategic goals in response to unfavorable political, social, and economic circumstances. In light of these impending problems, community resilience and rehabilitation initiatives are important to temper the pressure of social problems caused by the demographic issues and a lack of resources.

## GLOBAL TERRORIST REHABILITATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMES: THE STATE OF THE ART

Professor Rohan Gunaratna



*Professor Rohan Gunaratna*

*Professor of Security Studies and Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism,  
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

Professor Rohan Gunaratna spoke of the current state and progress of global terrorist rehabilitation and community engagement programmes.

### **Counter-terrorism Operations**

In exploring the various approaches of fighting terrorism, Professor Gunaratna began with a brief assessment of global counter-terrorism operations. He noted that in the last 10-15 years, the international community had adopted hard approaches such as disruption, capture and kill operations. Though these “fighting fire with fire” methods have been effective, by themselves, these methods will not produce the desired outcome of eliminating the terrorist threat. To better manage the threat, new methods and more far reaching strategies are needed.

### **Rehabilitation and Reintegration**

Professor Gunaratna highlighted rehabilitation and reintegration programmes as an important and innovative approach. Unless terrorists in

custody changed their views, when released they will continue to pose an enduring threat to public safety and security. Terrorists will contribute to regeneration by spreading their radical ideas amongst the population, increasing their pool of supporters and sympathisers. Furthermore, he added that they will create a terrorist iconography, earning the status of heroes worthy of respect and emulation by the next generation of terrorist recruits. In order to change their mindsets towards rejecting violence and embracing peace, a rehabilitation programme is important.

### **Aspects of rehabilitation programme**

Professor Gunaratna emphasised that there are certain aspects of successful rehabilitation programmes that needed to be considered to develop them globally. Firstly, there must be a dedicated specialist government body to organise and coordinate terrorist rehabilitation programmes by working with community partners and the private sector. One of the principal reasons

why many terrorist rehabilitation programmes failed was because they lacked a dedicated specialist organisation. Secondly, there must be a religious council comprising religious scholars and teachers with its own strategy and action plan. In Singapore, the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) is a voluntary group comprising Islamic scholars and teachers, who assist in counselling and rehabilitating the terrorist detainees. Thirdly, it is important to build government partnership with schools such that they do not become centres for the production of a new generation of extremists and terrorists. In Singapore none of the *madrasahs* produced Jemaah Islamiyah terrorists; instead, these terrorists came from non-religious schools. However, there are a number of countries in South and Southeast Asia where terrorists originated from religious schools.

### **Components of Rehabilitation**

Professor Gunaratna then shared what he believed were the six key components of a successful rehabilitation programme: training and education, prison standards, religious counselling, psychological counselling, aftercare and intelligence gathering in prisons. He emphasised that intelligence efforts should continue even after the detainees are released and reintegrated to the society in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme. Similarly, post-release aftercare initiatives are also an important component of the rehabilitation programme.

### **Modes of rehabilitation**

Subsequently, he shared the six modes of rehabilitation, modelled after the methods used by the RRG in Singapore. Initially, this model consisted of the psychosocial, religious and spiritual, and social and family rehabilitation. The model was later adapted to the conditions of over a dozen countries, and expanded to include educational, recreational and vocational programmes.

### **Global Rehabilitation Initiatives**

In view of the increasing employment of rehabilitation by governments globally, Professor Gunaratna highlighted the various programmes implemented across the world. He discussed the progress they have made, and the lessons that could be drawn from them.

He added that for a rehabilitation programme to be successful, governments should continue to support the programme with intellectual

and material resources as rehabilitation and community engagement are long-term processes. Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Colombia and Spain have established rehabilitation programmes. However, in some of these countries the programmes were now defunct due to discontinued government funding and support. For example, Egypt was one of the pioneer countries in the contemporary period that had implemented a robust rehabilitation programme. This programme had unfortunately ended because essential resources for the sustenance of the programme were diverted.

Professor Gunaratna also highlighted the need to build multi-faceted programmes that included not just rehabilitation but also community engagement. In Egypt and Algeria, though their rehabilitation programmes were now defunct, their community engagement programmes are still in operation. In contrast, the Libyan government lacked a reintegration programme which is one form of community engagement. As a result, due to the lack of engagement some members of the Libyan Islamic Fighter Group (LIFG) have now returned to extremism and terrorism after being released.

Turning his attention to programmes in Southeast Asia, Professor Gunaratna recounted the success of the counter-terrorism strategy in Singapore. In its efforts to fight terrorism, Singapore built its operational counter-terrorism strategy in parallel with rehabilitation and community engagement programmes. He labelled such an approach as “smart power” strategy which integrated both “hard power” with “soft power.” Using Malaysia and Indonesia as examples, Professor Gunaratna emphasised the importance of government institutions in formalising the counter-terrorism programmes. In Malaysia, the terrorist rehabilitation programme conducted by the police is extremely successful. Indonesia on the other hand, recently established a national counter-terrorism agency. The establishment of this agency is indicative of the transformation from ad-hoc programmes into a more formalised and structured system supported by the necessary specialist capabilities.

Professor Gunaratna also applauded the success of the multi-faceted programme in Sri Lanka, which had rehabilitated 11,500 of its 12,000 terrorist detainees. Although a handful of these detainees

went back to crime after being released, he emphasised that thus far none had turned back to terrorism.

The Columbian reintegration programme was unique in its ability to target both left-wing terrorists (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia) and right-wing terrorists (United Self-Defence Forces of Columbia). Similarly, in Spain, the programme targets ethno-nationalist terrorists. Professor Gunaratna iterated that terrorism does not necessarily occur only in countries with a strong Muslim community. He noted that the organisation with the largest number of suicide attacks came from a Hindu and Christian organisation instead. In the West, the United Kingdom was one of the first to develop a community engagement programme. The United States focuses on deterrence instead of deradicalisation. There are also multi-lateral organisations working in this field such as the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the European Platform for Rehabilitation.

## **Challenges**

Professor Gunaratna proceeded to discuss the challenges of implementing rehabilitation programmes. First, each rehabilitation programme is unique and thus, there is no “one size fits all” approach. Instead it needs to be adapted to the culture and conditions of the recipient country. Second, the level of commitment for reintegration efforts determines the success of rehabilitation when detainees are released to be amongst the community. Third, the religious representatives of each faith must be selected carefully. Fourth, a proper legal framework is needed to uphold restorative justice. Fifth, community resilience is needed to ensure social stability to prevent reintegrated terrorists from returning to terrorism. The sixth and most important is to have leaders with not just the ability but also the political will to support rehabilitation programmes.

## **Future**

Professor Gunaratna recommended five measures as a way forward for such programmes. First, the existing structures of terrorist rehabilitation and community engagement programmes need to be sustained in the long term. Second, there is a need to focus on the existing ad-hoc programmes and formalise their structures. Third, the existing programmes and structures would require

refinement. Fourth, there should be efforts to explore the psychometrics and ways to measure success and failure. In this regard, he acknowledged the notable efforts of Professor Arie Kruglanski of the University of Maryland in producing the radicalisation and deradicalisation index. Fifth, the threat has shifted to cyberspace. He suggested building websites to counter extremist ideology and promote moderation with the support of the European Union (EU) and the US on the project.

## **Conclusion**

Professor Gunaratna urged the global community to make rehabilitation a global imperative. He underscored the need to build partnerships in the West to achieve global success, as most of these rehabilitation programmes are situated in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Professor Gunaratna highlighted the importance of an effective rehabilitation programme by sharing his personal experience in interviewing terrorists. He outlined the extent to which rehabilitation should influence them to change. He felt that it is insufficient for detainees to merely repent and reject violence; instead, it is necessary to ensure that they feel inclined to champion peace and have a desire to contribute to the agenda of preventing other terrorists from inflicting harm.

Drawing on General Howard’s point on cyber-terrorism, Professor Gunaratna added that while there exists less than one hundred websites that counter the ideology, he found over ten thousand terrorist and extremist websites. He emphasised the importance of building capacity and capabilities in the next decade to counter their increasing cyberspace presence.

While success is gradually attained, Professor Gunaratna stressed that government partnership with private organisations and civil societies is extremely important. Since the community is a crucial support base that terrorists depend on, community engagement is an essential tool in the battle against terrorists.

He concluded by applauding the RRG’s principal belief of developing a humane approach to detainee rehabilitation. Professor Gunaratna believed that the winning of their hearts and minds is the only way to alter their beliefs in violence and extremism.

## PANEL 2 REHABILITATION INITIATIVES

### PANELISTS

**Dr Abdul Rahman Al Hadlaq**

General Director, Ideological Security Directorate,  
Ministry of Interior, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Professor Irfan Idris, MA**

Director of Deradicalisation, National Counter-  
Terrorism Agency, Indonesia

**Ustaz Mohamad Feisal Mohamad Hassan**

Secretariat Member, Religious Rehabilitation  
Group and Associate Research Fellow, S.  
Rajaratnam School of International Studies,  
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

**Mr Ali Soufan**

Chief Executive Officer, The Soufan Group, USA

*Chaired by Professor Rohan Gunaratna, Professor  
of Security Studies and Head, International Centre  
for Political Violence and Terrorism Research,  
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies,  
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*



Panel 2 (From left): Mr Ali Soufan, Ustaz Mohamad Feisal Mohamad Hassan, Professor Rohan Gunaratna, Professor Irfan Idris, and Dr Abdul Rahman Al Hadlaq

## SAUDI ARABIA'S INITIATIVE: EFFORTS IN COUNTERING RADICALISATION

Dr Abdul Rahman Al Hadlaq



*Dr Abdul Rahman Al Hadlaq  
General Director, Ideological Security Directorate, Ministry of Interior, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*

Dr Al Hadlaq began his presentation by contextualising Saudi Arabia's counter-terrorism strategy and introducing the "3M theory" used by his country. The theory suggests that terrorism is triggered by the combination of three conditions: Men with grievances and involved in terrorist organisations, Money, and the Mindset of violence. By identifying these three conditions, Saudi Arabia was able to focus its counter-terrorism strategies on eliminating these factors on an individual basis to prevent the conditions for terrorism from developing.

A two-pronged approach is used by Saudi Arabia to address men with grievances. The hard approach of directly tackling and eliminating the organisation, is used in conjunction with a soft approach of working on the demands and problems of the population. For instance, in response to the grievances of university students, the Saudi Arabian government has not only made universities increase their intake, but has also taken steps to send students abroad to pursue further education.

Secondly, the government cuts off funding to

terrorist organisations by banning monetary contributions to mosques which are typically used by terrorist organisations to procure donations. Furthermore, to mitigate terrorist financing, the government has reorganised charities in order to trace the recipients of this funding.

Dr Al Hadlaq emphasised that an ideology cannot be fought with guns or any other hard measures, in view of the difficulties in changing mind-sets; the Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Aftercare (PRAC) programmes were created to counter this violent ideology.

### **Prevention**

Dr Al Hadlaq elaborated on the programmes encompassed under PRAC, beginning with the efforts undertaken under its Prevention programme. The preventive element is exercised in partnership with mosques, schools, universities, families and relatives, prisons, and the media. More importantly, the government has begun to focus more on preventing online radicalisation by creating websites and videos to counter the ideology propagated by extremists and to refute their arguments. This is done whilst monitoring

materials found on the Internet, analysing it and blocking these websites if necessary.

## **Rehabilitation**

Before delving into the current rehabilitation initiatives, Dr Al Hadlaq charted the development of the rehabilitation programme in Saudi Arabia. The rehabilitation programme first started in 2005 with an Advisory (Counselling) Committee in their prison system. In 2007, the authorities set up the Prince Mohammad Bin Nayef Centre for Counselling and Care. The objectives of the programme are to undermine extremist ideology and replace it with moderate ideologies, to reintegrate the extremists upon their release, and to conduct assessments of the current programme.

The specialised rehabilitation programme targets not only the extremists, but also includes those who have been detained, those out on bail including the released detainees, their families, and extremists present amongst the general public. Dr Al Hadlaq emphasised that the overall objective is to win the hearts and minds of extremists through engagement, raising awareness, and providing financial and moral support instead of providing opportunities for Al-Qaeda to support them. He believed that winning the hearts and minds of extremists has the added effect of gaining their assistance and support in preventing further recruitment, as well as encouraging them to be better citizens of the country.

Dr Al Hadlaq then highlighted the changes in the programme since its 2005 and 2007 initiatives. Previously under the Rehabilitation Committee, there were only two sub-programmes – one-on-one individual counselling and group counselling. Both of these programmes catered mainly for the detainees. Now, the Saudi Arabian government has added counselling sessions for female detainees to broaden the scope of its target groups. He drew attention to the newly established preventive counselling programme outside the prisons; it has three components. The first is awareness counselling which targets cities and areas vulnerable to extremist propaganda. Professors and religious counsellors are sent to an identified area for fifteen days to counter violent extremist ideologies using a specific targeted campaign. The second is directed counselling, which counsels families who have been identified as susceptible. Lastly there is the electronic counselling, an open communication channel which comprises a website where any citizen (including extremists) can openly ask questions.

Dr Al Hadlaq discussed the various facilities available at the rehabilitation centre. These programmes included a variety of recreational and artistic activities available in addition to the typical classroom-based activities. He said the recreational programme served a dual purpose of not just providing entertainment, but it also allowed social workers to monitor the behaviour and attitudes of the extremists during their interaction with others. To address the social challenges faced by detainees, they have in place a programme to discuss different social settings to aid detainees' reintegration into society. At the same time, social services are provided to provide financial support to families as well as facilitate visits between the detainee and his family.

## **Aftercare**

Dr Al Hadlaq then elaborated on the Aftercare programme of Saudi Arabia. As part of the aftercare programme, officers in charge of the Rehabilitation component of the programme continue to keep in touch with the released detainees and their families to monitor their reintegration into society. Assistance provided by the Aftercare programme includes financial and moral support for the families especially in the initial year of the detainee's release. The released detainees are encouraged to find activities that would keep them busy such as going back to school, or taking up a job. He noted that such activities are likely to enhance the process of a complete rehabilitation.

## **Lessons Learned**

Dr Al Hadlaq concluded by sharing some of the lessons learned by Saudi Arabia in the process of implementing their rehabilitation programme. First, the programme has to be comprehensive, varied and constantly evaluated. Second, having financial resources alone is insufficient. Instead, quality practitioners and professionals who are willing to help are extremely important in the eventual success of the rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. Third, the programmes undertaken would need to focus on the role of national identity and positive citizenship. Lastly, international cooperation is necessary to fully confront a global problem like terrorism. Sharing of experiences between countries is as important as assisting each other with future work. For example, Saudi Arabia contributes to this global agenda by providing training to imams and security officers, having its scholars write in both Arabic and English to make it accessible to more countries, and engaging with new media through YouTube, Twitter and Facebook.

## INDONESIA'S INITIATIVE: REHABILITATION OF FORMER TERRORISTS IN PRISON

Professor Irfan Idris



Professor Irfan Idris

Director of Deradicalisation, National Counter-Terrorism Agency, Indonesia (BNPT)

Professor Irfan Idris, Director of Deradicalisation at the National Counter-Terrorism Agency, Indonesia, spoke about his country's efforts in using *wayang kulit*, the ancient Indonesian art of shadow puppetry, to rehabilitate detained terrorists. He told participants that Indonesia's rehabilitation strategy, which emphasises religious counselling, has incorporated cultural elements to change the militant mindset in the past two years.

### **Importance of Psychological and Cultural Performances**

According to Professor Irfan Idris, the psychological and cultural programmes are key to the terrorist rehabilitation strategy as many detainees hold strongly to their deviant religious understandings and reject religious counselling by the counter-terrorism authorities. The counter-terrorism authorities attempt to get their intended messages across to the detainees through *wayang kulit* shows. Professor Irfan Idris said that cultural techniques are often more useful than religious ones because the detainees think they understand Islam well.

Professor Irfan Idris then elaborated on the detainee-centric aspect of Indonesia's rehabilitation programme. He shared that the programme focuses on equipping former terrorists with the correct understanding of Islam, strengthening their psychological willpower to get out of terrorist networks and helping them reintegrate into society. It also aims to imbue them with a spirit of harmony and respect towards others, as well as on understanding of the concepts of nationalism and governance. Thus the main thrusts of the programme include refuting radical religious ideas, imbuing them with the concept of nationalism, and psychological strengthening. Professor Irfan Idris emphasised the importance of religious counselling as the extremists were likely to be adamant that they were the ones with the true understanding of religion, which would in turn limit the effectiveness of educating them about the religion.

Understanding the importance of having a customised rehabilitation programme for each detainee, a needs assessment is carried out

based on factors such as the position of the detainee within the JI terrorist network, his level of ideological conviction and mental state, his behaviour record in prison, the length of his prison sentence and the security standards of the prison. Thereafter, the detainees will undergo rehabilitation and psychological counselling. The counselling sessions are intensive and conducted either individually or in a group. The rehabilitation process also focuses on engaging the detainee's family based on the notion that family members can better support the detainee upon his release as they would then have a common understanding of their religion.

### ***Reintegration of Detainees***

Professor Irfan Idris reiterated that the reintegration of detainees into society is vital to the success of the rehabilitation programme. He emphasised the importance of facilitating their return to society given the strong anti-terrorist sentiments of the Indonesian public. To aid them to reintegrate into society, the detainees are given opportunities to interact with public figures, religious leaders, cultural figures, youth figures and government officials. Similar activities are conducted with the families of the former terrorists, in collaboration

with local organisations such as the Indonesian Institute for Society Empowerment. Through participating in activities like sports, the detainees develop rapport and familiarity with committee members or prison officers involved in the rehabilitation programme. These interactions not only encourage communities to support the de-radicalisation process, but also support the detainees' reintegration into society upon their release. Furthermore, the prisons provide them with the necessary skills to be employable. The authorities hope that the support from the detainees' families and the community will deter them from pursuing their former ways.

Professor Irfan Idris then concluded his presentation by focusing on Indonesia's initiatives outside the prisons. Religious organisations are engaged in anti-radicalism and anti-terrorism training so that they can lead community engagement programmes and inoculate the population against extremism. Similar prevention and deradicalisation activities are conducted with educational, art and cultural institutes. In fact, the authorities also try to engage youth groups and other social organisations so that they can train young leaders to lead the rehabilitation process.

## SINGAPORE'S INITIATIVE: SINGAPORE'S TERRORIST REHABILITATION APPROACH - A 10-YEAR WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS JOURNEY

Ustaz Mohamad Feisal Mohamad Hassan



*Ustaz Mohamad Feisal Mohamad Hassan  
Secretariat Member, Religious Rehabilitation Group and Associate Research Fellow,  
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

In his presentation, Ustaz Mohamad Feisal shared Singapore's decade long experience in addressing the problem of terrorism using terrorist rehabilitation and community resilience initiatives. He began by giving the participants a brief history of how Singapore's rehabilitation programme started.

Ustaz Mohmed Feisal told the conference participants that the impetus to establish a religious counselling and rehabilitation group in Singapore came following the arrest and detention of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members in December 2001 under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for terrorism-related activities. They had been arrested for their plans to bomb potential targets in Singapore. At that time, the terms 'Jemaah' and 'Islamiyah' were commonly understood by many Muslims to mean the Islamic community which more than a billion Muslims all over the world belong to. However, the JI organisation did not represent the global Muslim community. It was a group of extremists who subscribed to a deviant ideology to establish an Islamic state by violent means.

### ***Government's Leadership: Key to a Successful Rehabilitation Approach***

Ustaz Mohamad Feisal went on to give an account of why and how the Singapore government responded to the emergent threat of transnational terrorism to Singapore's national security and racial harmony. He emphasised that the success of Singapore's rehabilitation initiatives hinged on one important factor – the political will of the government. The Singapore government showed the political will to take on the terrorist challenge with leadership and vision. In response to the crisis, then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong took the lead by holding a dialogue with Muslim and non-Muslim community leaders to discuss how the different communities felt about the JI incident. As this contentious issue was about conflicting ideologies and religious beliefs, it was decided right at the start that the philosophy behind rehabilitation efforts was to win the hearts and minds of the people. The Singapore government then developed a national security framework that contained three key components of prevention, protection and response. This integrated approach to national security was undertaken by a diverse

spectrum of ministries and government agencies to achieve total defence in dealing with the multi-dimensional security threat. The different branches of government were integrated together through streamlined structures, resource optimisation, synergy and utilising the domain expertise of each agency. Ustaz Mohamad Feisal termed this strategy as a whole of government approach.

### **United Purpose, Diversified Approach**

In addition, the government encouraged religious scholars from the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), case officers from the Ministry of Home Affairs, psychologists, and aftercare community groups to develop a comprehensive rehabilitation programme for the detained JI extremists. Ustaz Mohamad Feisal added that the RRG was a voluntary organisation that was formed on 23 April 2003. It comprises Islamic scholars and teachers, namely the ulama and asatizah, as religious counselling is an integral part of terrorist rehabilitation. The RRG members felt that it was their responsibility to correct the deviant ideology of the detainees and help them lead a purposeful Islamic way of life in a multi-racial and multi-religious Singaporean society. This mindset change came about as the Muslim religious community realised that they play an important role in partnering the government to maintain the peace and harmony of the nation. The RRG's primary aim is, thus, to assist in the rehabilitation of Jemaah Islamiyah detainees, including those under restriction order, detention order, and even their family members. Ustaz Mohamad Feisal highlighted four important steps in the approach undertaken by the RRG to counsel JI detainees: (1) eradicate their negatively imbibed ideology; (2) replace their negative ideology with positive ones; (3) imbue in them a rightful understanding of Islamic concepts; and (4) exemplify the fulfilling ways of living in a multi-racial, multi-religious society.

He further elaborated the roles of four main groups of personnel involved in the rehabilitation programme. Case officers from the Ministry of Home Affairs are responsible for providing administrative and case management support, establishing and maintaining positive relationships with detainees, attending to specific needs and tasks pertaining to pre- and post-detention requirements and preparing the profiles of detainees. The psychologists conduct psychological risk assessments, provide counselling services and manage the rehabilitation programme for detainees and those released under supervision.

The group of psychologists also conducts courses and briefings on issues related to terrorism and radicalisation for government agencies, and at both local and international conferences. The Aftercare Group (ACG) is made up of community-based groups which help to support the families of the JI detainees, taking care of their immediate needs such as housing, food, medical care and education matters. Apart from taking care of the welfare of the detainees' family members, the ACG also ensures that these families get support from the Malay-Muslim community and looks into the reintegration of the detainees into mainstream society. Even after detainees have been released, case workers continue to provide assistance and counselling services to their families. He also expressed his appreciation of the assistance from academic institutions, in particular, the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) at S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). Their help has been invaluable in helping the RRG understand the terrorist mind, various models for terrorist rehabilitation and network with different partners from all over the world.

### **Future Challenges**

Ustaz Mohamad Feisal concluded his presentation by talking about the future challenges of implementing rehabilitation programmes. First, self-radicalisation continues to be a problem not only for Singapore but also for many countries in the world. Second, terrorists are using social networking platforms to share their messages and recruit sympathisers. For example, the Taliban uses Twitter and Facebook accounts to reach out to potential recruits and their sympathisers. Third, the Internet has seen the emergence of self-made religious teachers as well as the so-called "e-fatwa". Such unreliable religious sources are difficult to stem due to the ubiquitous nature of the Internet. Fourth, terrorists are changing their approach to promote their propaganda. For instance, in 2010, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) released *Inspire* an English language online magazine to broaden its reach to English-speaking audience.

He ended with a quote from a former JI detainee who had undergone rehabilitation: "Yesterday, I was a JI member bent on violence and bloodshed. Today, I am a man given a second chance at life. Tomorrow, I want to be the best that I can be in life as a father and as a citizen. I cannot undo the past. But I can change my future."

## CHALLENGES OF REHABILITATION INITIATIVES

Mr Ali Soufan



*Mr Ali Soufan  
Chief Executive Officer, The Soufan Group, USA*

Mr Soufan, a former FBI Supervisory Special Agent, focused on the current challenges of rehabilitation initiatives. He cited several enduring obstacles that continued to pose a challenge to rehabilitation initiatives globally.

### ***Obstacles to Rehabilitation***

The first obstacle was the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of a rehabilitation or a counter-narrative programme. Mr Soufan believed that no programme is immune to the possibility of recidivism. He cited the example of Indonesia where 23 individuals were re-arrested over the last two years after having previously been released from rehabilitation programmes. Despite the potential pressure that could arise from the media choosing to sensationalise the failures and overlook successes, Mr Soufan opined that using metrics to continuously evaluate a programme can only serve to enhance the capability and reputation of the rehabilitation programme in the long run.

The second obstacle is the ability to reach out to the appropriate target audience for the

programme. Mr Soufan emphasised that it would be almost impossible to reach out to terrorists who are in the midst of conducting terrorist activities. Often the law enforcement agencies are only able to detain them when they are being recruited, or after they have been caught and are jailed. In light of the difficulty in accessing the appropriate target group, he noted that detention facilities played a crucial part of the rehabilitation process. However in many countries and even in the West prisons are becoming fertile ground for radicalisation. Instances of prison wardens being recruited to become terrorists reiterate the vulnerability of prisons as a source of radicalisation. Mr Soufan noted that in many prisons, terrorists continue to remain in control to the extent that they are even able to orchestrate terrorist activities from within their prison cells.

In fact, Mr Soufan attributed the limited effectiveness of some rehabilitation methods, such as encouraging detainees to take wives, to the awareness of the terrorists. He noted that since the detainees are cognisant of some of the tactics employed by governments, they pre-empt this by

finding wives within their own ideological groups, inter-marrying to create what Mr Soufan calls “tribes”. This effectively cements the ties between the terrorist groups, making deradicalisation extremely difficult if not impossible.

Mr Soufan highlighted additional challenges of rehabilitation. He noted that when the rehabilitated terrorists begin recanting and rejecting their previously-held beliefs, they often cannot cope with the pressures from peers, former colleagues and families. This is exacerbated by the ‘tribal’ connections created by the terrorist organisations, as previously mentioned. For individuals who possessed high levels of ideological motivation prior to the rehabilitative programmes, such pressures become immensely difficult to ignore and resist.

This becomes even more challenging when the detainees are merely in the midst of rehabilitation and recanting their beliefs, but have yet not fully adopted the new ideological perspective. Terrorists not only exert pressures on their peers, but also on the community leaders who are propagating a different view from theirs. They try to intimidate those providing a counter-narrative to their ideological rhetoric be they clerics, journalists or scholars, sometimes to the extent of resorting to assassination attempts.

Another obstacle is that there is no cookie-cutter approach in countering ideology and countering narratives. The rehabilitation programme developed by Singapore is tailored to Singapore’s unique context such as its size, society, harmony of different religions and cultures. Even within countries, between cities and towns, the narratives and ideologies of local terrorists differ greatly due to the difference in local incubating factors. In order to make the programmes more effective, Mr Soufan believed that the local factors have to be tackled directly by the local community since it is the local community that has the clearest understanding of the local circumstances. He

notes that the question remains: How do we develop a system for the international community to cooperate and fight violent extremism globally?

The penultimate obstacle identified by Mr Soufan is that of terminology. Despite the fact that deradicalisation, rehabilitation and counter-terrorism are all different concepts, they are frequently used interchangeably. For instance, a person can be radical without being considered a terrorist. This creates confusion over the effectiveness of a programme, especially in the West, where they find it difficult to comprehend the different degrees of Islamic adherence and what is considered radical amongst Muslim communities.

The final obstacle Mr Soufan highlights is that of a lack of political will. Rehabilitation is commonly perceived as “ineffective” or “toothless” because of its “soft power” nature. Because rehabilitation takes a long period of time to have noticeable results and is extremely resource intensive, politicians seem to prefer the counter-terrorist tactics such as capture and kill. Rehabilitation programmes easily lose political support when the politicians do not see tangible results, especially in the global context of a financial crisis, where governments have greater pressures on their budgetary allocations.

### ***Role of the International Community***

Mr Soufan concluded by emphasising the need for the international community to work closely together by sharing information, experiences and results in order to learn from each other’s rehabilitation programmes. He reiterated that differences in political, cultural and social factors should not hinder individual countries from developing a programme in specific areas, though he also cautioned against directly ‘copying’ each other’s rehabilitation programme. Mr Soufan was optimistic that with such international cooperation it would be possible to overcome the above obstacles and build successful rehabilitation programmes.

**PANEL 3  
COMMUNITY COUNTER-IDEOLOGY EFFORTS**

**PANELISTS**

**Mr Thomas Samuel**

Director, Research and Publications Division,  
Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-  
Terrorism, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia

**Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff Hassan**

Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of  
International Studies, Singapore

**Ms Malkanthi Hettiarachchi**

Clinical Psychologist, Foundation for Reconciliation,  
Sri Lanka

**Sheikh Musa Admani**

University Imam, City University London, UK

*Chaired by Associate Professor Bilveer Singh,  
Department of Political Science, National University  
of Singapore and Adjunct Senior Fellow, Centre of  
Excellence for National Security, S. Rajaratnam School  
of International Studies, Nanyang Technological  
University, Singapore.*



*Panel 3 (From left): Sheikh Musa Admani, Ms Malkanthi Hettiarachchi,  
Associate Professor Bilveer Singh, Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff Hassan and Mr Thomas Samuel.*

## A COMMUNITY COUNTER-IDEOLOGY RESPONSE – STRATEGIES TO REACH OUT TO THE YOUTH

Mr Thomas Samuel



*Mr Thomas Samuel*

*Director, Research and Publications Division, Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia*

Mr Samuel began by emphasising the importance of reaching out to the youth as part of the efforts undertaken by communities to counter the ideological response. He noted that globally 17% of the population are youth. This small but pertinent percentage represents 100% of the future. He argued that if a violent act comes from a radical thought, effort must be directed to counter such thoughts.

Mr Samuel noted that while extremists focus on the audience, the authorities focus on the extremists. He added that the authorities use an approach involving “five Ds” – Detect, Deter, Deny, Disrupt and Destroy. Extremists on the other hand, direct their tactics, resources and focus on winning hearts and minds.

### ***Susceptibility of Youth to Extremist Ideology***

Mr Samuel then elaborated on several characteristics that make youth particularly susceptible to being radicalised by extremists.

These factors included their propensity to take risks and become emotionally intense, the importance that the youth place on friends, their dislike of hypocrisy and superficiality and their constant search for an identity. Mr Samuel highlighted several strategies that would be useful to reduce the susceptibility of youth to radical elements in society. These include providing avenues for the youth to channel their energy positively and by using former terrorists to challenge the youth’s self-perception of vulnerability.

Another strategy was constant engagement involving an emphasis on mentorship to build positive peer groups. Mr Samuel also noted that many young people who turn towards extremism tend not to have a good relationship with their parents. This underscores the importance of working with parents to build stronger family environments. The significance of undercutting the extremists’ ability to provide youth with an identity was also cited. Mr Samuel emphasised on

the need for a positive identity based on an idea of creating “Soldiers of Peace” instead of “Soldiers of War”.

Mr Samuel elaborated on the importance of understanding the reasons behind the attraction of youth to terrorist rhetoric. He noted that extremists’ messages are laced with certain truths and lies. Extremist groups often use three basic premises: first, that there are injustices in the world; second, that there is a need to act and third, that violence is the only response. Extremists often make effective use of videos and the quotation of scriptures in their emotional appeals that call youth to action, which helps them negate the need to justify their use of violence. Based on this, Mr Samuel outlined that it is crucial to show that violence is not the only response. He described his own experience of showing the youth examples from multiple cases in history where groups that used violence were not able to achieve their objectives.

Mr Samuel also noted that youth tend to associate non-violence with non-action. And for youth, non-action is unacceptable. Developing the concept of non-violence, he added, demonstrates to youth that non-violence is a powerful tool. Some of the aspects of non-violence that he highlighted

included creating awareness, meeting immediate needs of victims, shaming the enemy and even building solidarity amongst other observers.

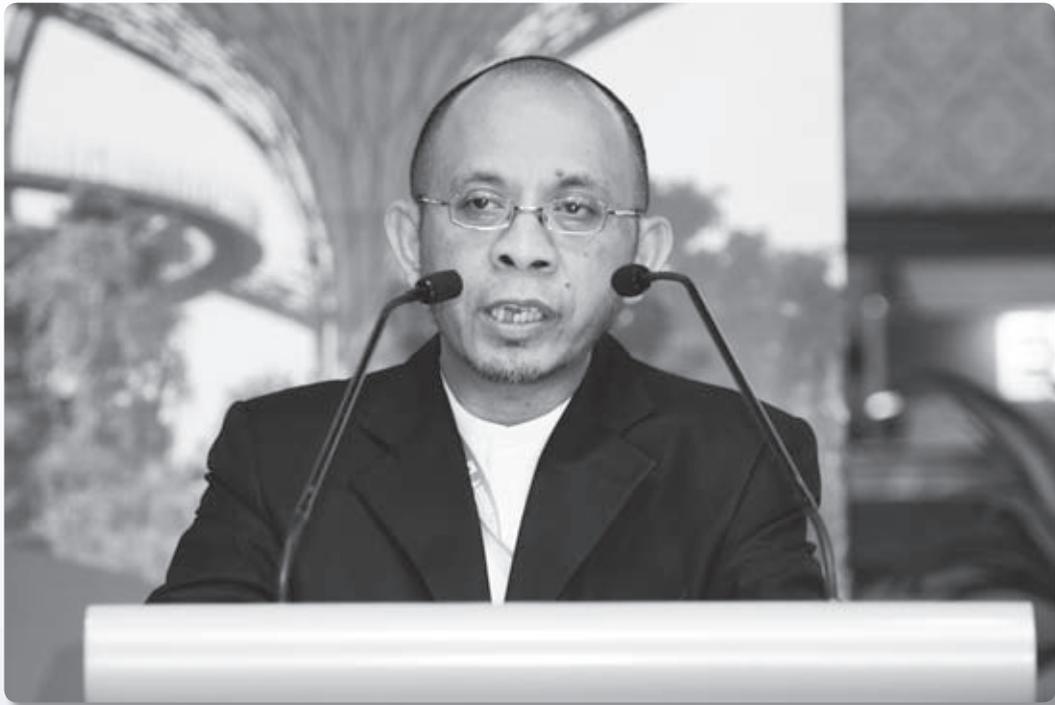
## **Challenges**

Describing some of the challenges, Mr Samuel said that the platforms in which content is delivered to youth is crucial. However, this must be accompanied by a willingness to listen to them and take their opinions seriously. He underscored the value of developing a counter-narrative that negates the effectiveness of extremist messages through “mental firewalls.” He reiterated the difficulty of stopping exposure to extremist messages. As such he added that “inoculation” becomes the best method to prevent youth from being radicalised.

In conclusion, he shared the importance of going to places where the message will not be popular in order to get real feedback. Mr Samuel highlighted the importance of forming networks and collaboration with institutions rather than individuals to extend the lifespan of any rehabilitation programme. Finally, he said that youth should not be seen as part of the problem but instead as being a viable part of the solution.

## COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SINGAPORE

Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff Hassan



*Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff Hassan*

*Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff briefly outlined the history of extremism amongst Muslims whilst noting that this is not a post-9/11 phenomenon. He added that the origins of extremism go back to the 1960s in Egypt. He argued that current efforts in counter-ideology by Muslim scholars are not a reaction to 9/11, but rather a continuation of a long-established initiative to combat terrorism.

### **Centrality of Ideology**

Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff emphasised the centrality of ideology in Muslim radicalisation and how it underscores the need for counter-ideology in contemporary counter-terrorism practice. He noted that the hardline approach of the War on Terror had not produced the desired result of defeating violent extremist groups like Al-Qaeda. Counter-ideology is now being incorporated in counter-terrorism strategies to delegitimise the ideological underpinning of such groups.

Extremists spend a lot of time developing and defending their ideology to make their actions fit within their worldview. Two examples quoted were the Al Maqdisi website and Imam Samudra's

book detailing the ideological justification for the Bali bombings. Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff noted that it was important to treat violent extremists as rational actors as they would not invest effort into ideological materials if they were not important to them and their cause or if there was no demand for such materials. However, Ustaz Dr Muhammad Hassan also highlighted that though ideology is central to radicalisation of Muslims, it is not the only factor. Furthermore, he pointed out that the role of ideology has been contested.

### **Framework for Effective Counter-Ideology**

Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff's presentation further focused on outlining a broad framework for effective counter-ideology work based on the Singapore experience. He noted that while the framework does not offer a precise model that can be followed, it does cover important elements that are necessary for kick-starting an effective programme in counter-ideology. Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff then outlined various elements: clear objectives to inoculate Muslims from extremist ideology, rehabilitate violent extremists, and minimise non-Muslims' anxiety and suspicion.

Other factors included creating an accurate understanding of ideology through the use of theology and the juristic approach, having the right partnerships and finally, awareness of context, including cultural realities. Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff also noted the importance of having an inclusive front. Counter-ideology should bring together Muslims and not divide them. He said that there was also a need to address the grievances expressed by extremists to win their trust and remove root causes.

Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff drew his presentation to a close by stating that there should be an

emphasis in Western countries to overcome hate crimes and discrimination to avoid fuelling further grievances. By combating the perception of incompatibility of Islam with democracy and modernity, the chances of clashes would be minimised. The war against terrorism is not won purely by countering extremist ideology within the Muslim community, he said, but also with concerted efforts to minimise prejudiced views towards Muslims held by some non-Muslims.

## DECONSTRUCTION OF RADICAL IDEOLOGIES AND DETAINEE REINTEGRATION

Ms Malkanthi Hettiarachchi



*Ms Malkanthi Hettiarachchi  
Clinical Psychologist, Foundation for Reconciliation, Sri Lanka*

Ms Hettiarachchi began by deconstructing the relationship between the individual and the community. The individual is recruited from the community and is then sustained by the extremist group through a “terror-justifying” ideology and narrative. This then leads to mobilising the individual to act for the extremist group and creating fear in the community. When captured or after surrender, it is important that these individuals are rehabilitated and subsequently reintegrated back into the community.

She proposed an understanding of the deconstruction of radical ideologies in three phases. In the first phase, which is prior to radicalisation, it is important to know what were the main ideas and values of the individual’s family and background. For the second phase, which is the time spent with the terrorist group, knowing what changes occurred in the individual is critical. In the final phase, which is after capture or surrender, the focus would be on the process through which an individual can be reintegrated and the factors about the individual that need to be changed.

### ***Disengagement from Violent Radicalisation***

Ms Hettiarachchi noted that the disengagement from violent radicalisation does not occur in a vacuum. Engagement is needed to challenge the justifications for violence and reframe it to facilitate the reconstruction or justification of an alternative non-violent ideology. This process, however, results in cognitive dissonance that will be reconciled when the individual accepts the new framework as his own. To facilitate the transformation, it is crucial for practitioners to understand the justifications of the extremist worldview and reach out while creating a safe, secure and respectful environment.

The “6+1” rehabilitation model developed in Sri Lanka drew on the Singaporean experience but evolved with practice, with components created to mirror aspects that the Tamil Tigers had previously manipulated. The six components included 1) education, 2) spiritual, religious and cultural, 3) social, community and family, 4) livelihood and vocational, 5) psychosocial and 6) sports and recreational. The “+1” refers to community engagement, which involves working with a

diverse range of partners such as the beneficiaries' families and rehabilitation centre staff. In addition, members of the Tamil diaspora and the local community were brought into the system to create a more holistic and multi-level reintegration process.

### ***The "5 R" Model***

Ms Hettiarachchi went on to describe how the rehabilitation and reintegration programme was supported by other processes as part of a

larger "5 R" model which include reconstruction, resettlement and reconciliation. She noted that the rehabilitation and reintegration programme received support from the highest level of the political leadership and faced no opposition from the public. Ms. Hettiarachchi also touched on the importance of an aftercare programme once beneficiaries were reintegrated back into society.

## EFFORTS TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS MODERATION AMONG MUSLIM YOUTHS IN THE UK

Sheikh Musa Admani



*Sheikh Musa Admani  
University Imam, City University London, UK*

Sheikh Musa Admani noted that terrorism and extremism are not new and have been present for decades. He shared that efforts to address these have been ongoing in the UK since 1995. However, such efforts have been hindered by the appointment of individuals such as Abu Hamza as imams. In his opinion, individuals such as Abu Hamza and Abu Qatadah are not suitable to be appointed as imams for different reasons. The former was deemed unsuitable due to his extreme beliefs, shaped largely by his participation in the Soviet-Afghan war whereas the latter could not communicate with the masses as he could speak only Arabic.

### ***Moderate versus Extremist***

As Sheikh Musa Admani has had much interaction with young people in the university, he chose to focus his presentation on them. His experience has led him to believe that the only way to address the problem of extremism among youths is to respect the fact that young people have their opinions and they want them heard. They also demand that adults treat them with respect and listen to their problems. He felt that it is important

to avoid labelling these young people negatively and exclude them from mainstream society. Young people who hold views that are different from their peers should, therefore, not be marginalised. It would be more useful and effective to engage them and find out what they are thinking. In so doing, the authorities would then have a better understanding of the pertinent issues they faced. According to Sheikh Musa Admani, a young person can become an extremist either because he is disposed to those tendencies psychologically, or he is making use of the extremist ideology for his own ends. There are also young individuals who are easily angered and manipulated because of their vulnerability.

### ***Importance of Engaging Youth***

Sheikh Musa Admani then recounted an incident to highlight the importance of engaging youth. The first case he mentioned showed how a lack of communication within a family, or between teachers and their students can result in serious consequences. In this case, a cleric had no idea that his own family member was an aspiring terrorist until he was apprehended for terrorist activities

by the authorities. Sheikh Musa Admani pointed out that it is important that adults engage the youth in meaningful conversations regarding the challenges they encounter and seek to intervene in the earlier stages of radicalisation.

He also highlighted the importance of giving young individuals the opportunity to explain their problems and views as well as engaging them in frank discussions about issues that bother them. Sheikh Musa Admani noted that empowering young people to speak their mind would help them to be moderate in their views.

At the end of his presentation, Sheikh Musa Admani stressed that there is a need to attempt novel and different ways to engage youths, particularly those with hardlined extremist beliefs. He concluded by urging the authorities and those involved in countering terrorism to invest the time and energy to engage would be terrorists and young terrorists in constructive dialogues.

# International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience



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1. PM Lee Hsien Loong (right) with Dr Mustafa Cerić (left), the former Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina • 2. Guests get together at the Malay Heritage Centre • 3. Guests get together at the ICRR closing dinner • 4. PM Lee Hsien Loong (right) presenting a scroll to RRG members (left) at the ICRR closing dinner • 5. Former President S R Nathan at the ICRR • 6. Sister Maria Lau, President of the Inter-Religious Organisation • 7. PM Lee Hsien Loong (right) shaking hands with Prof Rohan Gunaratna (second from the left), Prof Rohan Gunaratna (left) and Ustaz Dr Mohamad Ali (right) • 8. RRG members at ICRR • 9. Former President S R Nathan at the ICRR • 10. Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong was presented with the RRG's commemorative book by the Co-Chairmen of RRG at ICRR closing dinner at Khadijah Mosque • 11. Associate Prof Dr Fatinah Yusoff speaking at the ICRR • 12. PM Lee Hsien Loong (left) and Co-Chairmen of RRG (second and third from the left) at the ICRR closing dinner • 13. RRG members at ICRR • 14. Guests at the Singapore Flyer • 15. Members of RRG at ICRR • 16. Associate Prof Dr Fatinah Yusoff speaking at the ICRR • 17. RRG members at ICRR • 18. Scroll Presentation by Inter-Religious Organisation (right) to commemorate RRG's 10th year anniversary with PM Lee Hsien Loong (left) and Co-Chairmen of RRG (second and third from the left) at the ICRR closing dinner • 19. Scroll Presentation by Inter-Religious Organisation (right) to commemorate RRG's 10th year anniversary with PM Lee Hsien Loong (left) and Co-Chairmen of RRG (second and third from the left) at the ICRR closing dinner • 20. RRG members at ICRR • 21. RRG members at ICRR • 22. RRG members at ICRR • 23. Members of the Geylang Serai IRCC at the closing dinner • 24. Guests on the way to the Malay Heritage Centre • 25. PM Lee Hsien Loong (right) with Prof Rohan Gunaratna (centre) and Prof Anwar Hossain (left) at the ICRR closing dinner

# International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience



ing dinner • 4. PM Lee Hsien Loong and Ustaz Ali Haji Mohamad at the launching of the RRG 10th year commemorative book • 5. Prof Rohan Gunaratna (right), DPM Teo Chee Hean (centre), Sister Maria with Co-Chairmen of RRG at the launching of the RRG 10th year commemorative book • 8. Assoc Prof Dr Fatimah Lateef (second from the left) with Archbishop Nicholas Chia (left) and members of IRO ah Mosque • 11. Ustazah Kalthum from RRG at the Q&A session • 12. Ambassador Barry Desker, Dean of RSIS (centre) with Ustaz Ali Haji Mohamad (second from the right), Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi Hassan mah Lateef (Fourth from the left) with members of Grassroots and RRG • 17. ICRR speakers and delegates at the Khadijah Mosque • 18. DPM Teo Chee Hean with Brigadier General (Retired) Russell Howard left) • 20. Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi Hassan and Ustaz Ali Haji Mohamad with Sheikh Musa Admani (right) • 21. Ambassador Barry Desker with Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf (left) • 22. VIP table at the ICRR closing rie Kruglanski (left)

**PANEL 4**

**ISLAM AGAINST EXTREMISM - MODERATION IN ISLAM AND RELIGIOUS HARMONY**

**PANELISTS**

**Dr Mustafa Ceric**

President, World Bosniak Congress,  
Former Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Dr Mohamad Fatris Bakaram**

Mufti of Singapore

**Tan Sri Professor Dr Mohd. Kamal Hassan**

Distinguished Professor, International Islamic  
University Malaysia

**Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf**

Chairman, Cordoba Initiative, New York, USA

*Chaired by Dr Albakri Ahmad, Dean, MUIS Academy,  
Islamic Religious Council of Singapore*



*Panel 4 (From left): Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, Tan Sri Professor Dr Mohd. Kamal Hassan, Dr Albakri Ahmad, Dr Mohamad Fatris Bakaram and Dr Mustafa Ceric*

## PROMOTING RELIGIOUS HARMONY

Dr Mustafa Ceric



*Dr Mustafa Ceric*

*President, World Bosniak Congress, Former Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina*

In his presentation, Dr Mustafa Ceric highlighted the need to develop harmonious relations among different religions and build a better understanding of the key concepts of Islam. He also shared Bosnia's experience in developing interfaith harmony.

### **Perception of Islam**

Dr Ceric noted that the September 11 terrorist attacks have significantly affected global perceptions of Islam. The incident triggered not only the media and politicians but also key leaders to perceive Islam differently. He cited the speech given at the University of Regensburg in Germany by Pope Benedict XVI in September 2006. The lecture, entitled *Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections*, explored the historical and philosophical differences between Islam and Christianity, and the relationship between violence and faith. In quoting a 14th Century Christian Emperor, his remarks were interpreted as an attack on Islam and it provoked outrage in the Muslim world. Dr Ceric said that this and other similar incidents following the September

11 attacks highlighted the important role the media, politicians and spiritual leaders play in guiding public sentiments. He cautioned that the unfair criticism and generalisation of the activities of a few radical Muslims by the afore-mentioned could have the detrimental effect of provoking mainstream Muslims against the other religious communities.

Dr Ceric emphasised that we should all accept the sensitivities of certain issues and should perform our role responsibly to further maintain and strengthen religious harmony in the world. He mentioned that Islam is a religion of peace and it does not support the idea of terror or promote violence. He iterated that it is even more important now for Muslims to engage actively with people of other faiths so that they gain a better understanding of other religions and are in a position to clarify that Islam does not condone terrorist attacks. To facilitate mutual understanding among diverse ethnic and religious groups, Dr Ceric highlighted four initiatives that have been implemented, including the United

Nations Alliance of Civilisation (UNAOC), which was established in 2005, at the initiative of the Governments of Spain and Turkey, under the auspices of the United Nations, and numerous discussion forums between Muslims and Catholics. Dr Cerić mentioned that some Muslims have made mistakes in the interpretation of the religion. They are propagating Islam with a wrong perspective which badly reflects on Islam and Muslims in general. He said that it is the responsibility of all true Muslims to raise their voices and explain the right concepts of Islam. He encouraged Muslims not to remain silent but to undo the damage that the extremists have done in misrepresenting Islam.

### ***Intra-religious Harmony***

In reference to the intra-religious harmony in Bosnia, Dr Cerić mentioned that in spite of witnessing large-scale violence, the people of Bosnia are very peaceful and are not vengeful, they want to move forward. People of different communities are living peacefully in Bosnia. He also mentioned the role played by the Inter-Religious Council of Bosnia – keeping believers of different religions together and by promoting interfaith harmony.

## PROMOTING INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING

Dr Mohamad Fatris Bakaram



*Dr Mohamad Fatris Bakaram  
Mufti of Singapore*

Dr Mohamad Fatris Bakaram highlighted the importance of maintaining a healthy and positive relationship between different communities through greater interaction and dialogue between followers of different faiths. He noted that the positive interaction would in turn help to cultivate and build deep bonds of friendship and empathy for each other.

### ***Islam and Interfaith Dialogues***

He emphasised that Islam is a religion that encourages interfaith understanding but there are individuals who are manipulating the concepts of Islam and widening the gap between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. A proper reading and understanding of the Quran, the engagement of Muslim communities in interfaith dialogues and the effective role of religious scholars can help to promote understanding among different religious communities. He also highlighted the need to strengthen the role of scholars and mosques in Muslims communities.

Dr Mohamad Fatris added that in the contemporary world, there are individuals who adopt violent

tactics in the name of Islam. These individuals promote misunderstanding among the Muslims and believers of other faiths. Translating their misconstrued verses of the Quran into violent actions, they have propagated the perception to non-Muslims that the problem lies with Islam. On the contrary, Islam promotes messages of tolerance, mercy, compassion, love, charity, forgiveness and humility. It is, therefore, essential for all Muslims to live up to the true message of Islam and promote better understanding among members of other religions.

### ***Role of Religious Scholars and Clerics***

He urged the religious scholars and clerics to clarify the verses of the Quran on jihad in the right context. He pointed out that a significant number of Muslims are not even aware of the theme of such verses due to their reluctance to talk about these issues. It is hence the duty of religious scholars and clerics to explain the context and true meaning of these verses and enable the Muslim community to discuss these issues with other communities with confidence through knowledge and understanding.

Dr Mohamad Fatris also highlighted the need to convince Muslims to participate in interfaith dialogues. He mentioned that such activities will not dilute or adversely impact their faith in the religion. He emphasised that in societies where people of multiple religions are living together, involvements in dialogues are essential. He opined that Muslims should be ready to get on board in these dialogues.

Lastly, he stressed on the role of scholars and mosques in promoting interfaith understanding. He said that some mosques in other parts of the world

have been used for the indoctrination of Muslims in extremist thoughts. We should not neglect the roles of mosques and should remain in touch with the Imams on the importance of promoting inter-communal living and understanding especially in a multi-racial and multi-religious society. Additionally, there is also a need to develop institutions where future religious scholars can be equipped with broadened knowledge of religion and global issues. As such, religious scholars would be better equipped to understand issues related to geopolitics and address them appropriately in the real spirit of Islam.

## THE CONCEPT OF *WASATIYYAH* AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ISLAMIC MODERATION

Tan Sri Professor Dr Mohd. Kamal Hassan



Tan Sri Professor Dr Mohd. Kamal Hassan  
Distinguished Professor, International Islamic University, Malaysia

Professor Mohd. Kamal Hassan explained the concept and the significance of Islamic Moderation in the contemporary world. He noted that in Muslim societies, *al-wasatiyyah* is an important concept that is much talked about after 9/11. It is an important concept that must be thoroughly understood by all Muslims.

Professor Mohd. Kamal said that Islam is a peaceful religion which advocates inter-religious tolerance but it is being distorted by the media, NGOs and religious fundamentalists in the world. The phenomenon of religious extremism as well as religious liberalism among some Muslim groups, has tarnished the image of Islam among non-Muslims both in the East and West.

In Muslim societies, the concept of *al-wasatiyyah* has not been given the attention it deserves. The Muslim militant groups in countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Southern Thailand and Mindanao tend to ignore mainstream religious doctrines or view points. This in turn has made it necessary for religious authorities and concerned Islamic scholars

to promote the correct and balanced understanding of Islamic teachings within the region.

### **Justice, Excellence and Balance**

He mentioned that the term *wasatiyyah* is used in the context of the Quranic expression "*ummatan wasatan*", which refers to the Universal Islamic Community or Nation having the attributes of Justice, Excellence and Balance in order to serve as Allah's trustworthy "witnesses over mankind" ("*shuhada'ala al-nas*") in this world and in the Hereafter (Q. 2: 143). It can also be translated as "Middle Position of Justice, Excellence and Balance" or "Justly Balanced Quality" or "Justly Balanced Nature" of Islam and the Islamic community. The more popular translation of the term, however, is "moderation." He elaborated that the peaceful quality of Islam has been corrupted by small but militant organisations and therefore moderation is important.

Professor Mohd. Kamal elaborated that *wasatiyyah* exists in between excess (*Ifrat*) and laxity (*Tafrit*). It rejects both licentiousness and exaggerated asceticism. He said that the three pillars of

*wasatiyyah*, Justice, Excellence and Balance or Moderation are interconnected. We cannot maintain peace while ignoring any of its pillars. He mentioned that many Muslims are not aware of this concept. This is the reason that they are missing the balance in their societies.

### ***Ignorance of Religious Doctrines***

On Muslim militants and sectarian groups, Professor Mohd. Kamal commented that many Muslim countries are facing militancy due to their ignorance of mainstream religious doctrines or viewpoints, or are bent upon bringing about socio-religious changes based upon their own visions of Islamic

society, culture or state. Thus, it is essential for religious authorities and concerned Islamic scholars to promote the correct and balanced understanding of Islamic teachings.

Professor Mohd. Kamal concluded by pointing out that the teachings of Islam are based on making things easy rather than making them difficult. The development and growth of democratic institutions and political culture in the ASEAN, together with the proper understanding and implementation of the principles of Islamic moderation, would ensure a more peaceful environment for Southeast Asian nations.

## ISLAM AGAINST EXTREMISM

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf



*Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf  
Chairman, Cordoba Initiative, New York, USA*

At the start of his presentation, Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf shared briefly with the audience about his background. He has previously lived in Malaysia, a country that is multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious, where there is a mufti and a chief mufti. He later migrated to the United States (US), where the US Constitution provides for a separation of church and state. He opined that the US, a country where many of its citizens hail from all parts of the world, can be seen as a composite of the whole Muslim community (Ummah). In his view, many US immigrants who are Muslims are trying to establish an identity for themselves as American Muslims.

Following the introduction, he recounted that after the 9/11 attacks, a journalist had told him that the majority of Americans can understand political liberation movements, like the Palestine issue. However, when political movements utilise the vocabulary of Islam and carry out acts of terrorism, it becomes very difficult for Americans not to arrive at the conclusion that Islam itself promotes this kind of ideology. He further noted that more often than not, when terrorists make use

of Islamic concepts to justify their extremist acts, these narratives can be very persuasive. He cited examples like Osama bin Laden and anecdotal evidence of Indonesian law enforcement officers who were influenced by the terrorist ideology of the detainees under their charge to illustrate the ease of becoming influenced and brainwashed by extremist ideology.

### ***Two-pronged Approach against Extremism***

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf suggested that the solution to the threat of extremism requires a two-pronged approach, one that calls for government agencies and non-governmental organisations to work together. He believed that such a partnership would be more effective in countering terrorism. He added that a case in point would be the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) which has partnered the Singapore government from its inception. In fact, he suggested that there is a need to re-brand Islam and that the RRG could franchise the work that they are doing so that the collective expertise, experience and wisdom gained can be passed on and to draw more people to their cause and be a part of the fraternity.

He went on to share with the participants another anecdote about a journalist telling him that the greatest enemy of Islam today is not Zionism but extremism within Islam. He said that it is important to define terrorism and agree on the definition or it will be very difficult to solve the problem of terrorism. Citing Caleb Carr's definition of "terrorism", which is the deliberate targeting of civilian non-combatants in order to achieve political objectives, Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf demonstrated that both state and sub-state actors would be guilty of terrorism.

### **Contributing Factors to Extremism**

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf mentioned that there are multiple factors that drew young people to extremism, including political grievances, economic constraints and lack of opportunities. He said that many Muslim youngsters in developed countries were involved in extremist activities due to religious constraints and confusion between Islamic practices and the culture in non-Muslim societies. He said that ideally, rehabilitation should address their ideological misconceptions of Islam, their physical, personal and communal needs, and to classify them as beneficiaries rather than terrorists. Such a holistic approach can

psychologically impress on them that they are not marginalised by the community.

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf then made reference to Professor Mohd. Kamal Hassan's speech on the concept of *al-wassatiyyah*. He said the concept is mentioned in verse 143 of Surah (chapter) Al-Baqarah of the Quran: "Thus have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced..." He highlighted the significance of the position of the verse in the chapter, saying that it occurred exactly in the middle of the chapter which contained 286 verses, to reinforce and underline the Quran's message for the Muslim community to be one that is balanced, moderate and just.

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf opined that the most powerful weapon against terrorism is to bear witness to God and the teachings of His Messenger. By encouraging the actual act of submitting to God, they can understand what it means to be a Muslim; and that Islam is a religion of peace. He concluded by emphasising the importance of helping the Muslim community to rediscover the spiritual dimension of Islam which will help all Muslims from succumbing to religious extremism.

**PANEL 5**  
**CHALLENGING AL-QAEDA'S NARRATIVE OF HATE AND VIOLENCE**

**PANELISTS**

**Dr Muchlis M. Hanafi**

Director Research for Quranic Studies, Religious Affairs Department, Indonesia

**Ustaz Dr Hassan Mohiuddin Qadri**

President, Supreme Council Minhaj ul-Quran International, Pakistan

**Ustaz Dr Mohamad Ali**

Secretariat Member, Religious Rehabilitation Group and Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

**Professor Sherman Jackson**

King Faisal Chair of Islamic Thought and Culture and Professor of Religion and American Studies and Ethnicity, University of Southern California, USA

*Chaired by Dr Abdul Rahman Al Hadlaq, Director of Counter-Ideological Unit, Ministry of the Interior, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*



*Panel 5 (From left): Professor Sherman Jackson, Ustaz Dr Mohamad Ali, Dr Abdul Rahman Al Hadlaq, Ustaz Dr Hassan Mohiuddin Qadri and Dr Muchlis M. Hanafi.*

## REPUDIATING AL-QAEDA'S NARRATIVE ON TAKFIR AND CONSPIRACY AGAINST ISLAM

Dr Muchlis M Hanafi



Dr Muchlis M Hanafi

Director Research for Quranic Studies, Religious Affairs Department, Indonesia

Dr Muchlis M Hanafi started his presentation by commenting that after the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden had identified the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and Israel as his main enemies and waged jihad against them. He also regarded leaders of some Arab and Islamic countries as enemies because they have assisted the US and its allies to attack Islam and Muslims. According to Osama bin Laden and other Muslim extremist groups, there is a Jewish-Christian conspiracy against Islam and Muslims and, thus, the "axis of evil" included Zionism (Jews), Christianity (Christians), Secularism (atheists) and Muslim rulers who are hostile towards Islam and Muslims.

### **The Takfir Discourse among Muslim Hard-Liners**

Dr Muchlis highlighted the notion of takfir (Accusing Others of Apostasy) to explain why Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups labelled leaders of some Arab and Islamic countries as apostates and sinners and their justification to wage war against them. Osama bin Laden declares that these Muslim leaders are apostates and sinners as they have helped non-believers to wage war against

their fellow Muslims, causing them to leave Islam (*riddah*). Moreover, they do not practise God's law but replace them with conventional laws. Osama bin Laden believed that jihad is legitimate as Islam allows the killing of non-believers, apostates or sinners to take revenge against their aggression and oppression.

Osama bin Laden further elaborated that Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups believe that Muslim countries today deserve to be called "*Darul Kufri*" (land of disbelief) and to be attacked. Al-Qaeda argues that the current leaders of Arab and Muslim countries resemble the Tatars who enacted a compilation of laws and constitutions adapted from various resources – Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc. Al-Qaeda often uses the fatwa on Tatars by Ibn Taymiyah to legitimise its attacks. It argues that Muslim authorities who collaborate with non-Muslim colonialists, the crusaders, communists or Zionists are like the people of Mardin who should be fought against because they aided and collaborated with the Tatars to attack the Muslims and do not follow the Sharia. Dr Muchlis argued that such religious misunderstanding often arise when *ijtihad* (the endeavour of Muslim scholars

to interpret a rule from the Quran and Hadith), is exercised without sufficient knowledge or with a partial understanding of religious texts. He emphasised that Al-Qaeda has used the fatwa on Tatars out of context.

## **Law for Those Committing Major Sins, are They Disbelievers?**

Dr Muchlis further outlined Al-Qaeda's reasons for labeling Muslims who committed major sins as non-believers. He argued that *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* (the majority of Muslims) do not label a Muslim as a non-believer as long as he does not stray from the fundamental teachings of Islam.

He cited the example of Prophet Muhammad treatment of Muslims who had committed crimes like adultery and theft and yet, the prophet did not expel them from Islam but still treated them as Muslims. Dr Muchlis argued that the sins or vices committed by a Muslim would not render the person an apostate as long as he or she believes in the truth of Islamic teachings and practises the religion. Furthermore, there is no reference in Quran or Sunnah on labeling rulers as non-believers only because they abandon and do not practice part of God's laws. It can only be said that the rulers have committed sins. He also noted that there is no ruling in the Quran and Sunnah (Prophet Muhammad's tradition) which states that authorities could be labelled as apostates simply because of their religious disobedience. At most, they were seen as sinful. Dr Muchlis also emphasised that labeling Islamic countries nowadays as *Darul Kufr* is inappropriate as Islamic values are still being upheld in these countries. Additionally, the classification of countries as *Darul Islam* (Islamic state/region) and *Darul Kufr* is no longer relevant in today's context. Rebutting Al-Qaeda's characterisation of Muslim authorities as resembling Tatars, Dr Muchlis argued that the Tatars were non-believers who derogated God's laws, whereas these Muslim rulers were practising Muslims albeit with some shortcomings. Hence, he countered that the fatwa is rendered inapplicable as the traits of the Tatars were not found in these Muslim rulers. Fatwas should be cognisant of current reality and needs and not be generalised without taking into consideration current realities. Dr Muchlis also said that Islam does not allow the overthrowing or killing of Muslim rulers even if they practised Islam superficially, for example, by performing prayers. The obligation of Muslims is to remind them through advice and peaceful message, and not through bloodshed.

## **Takfir in Quran and Sunnah**

Dr Muchlis cautioned against labeling someone or a group or institution as a non-believer. There is evidence from the Quran and Sunnah that showed that a Muslim cannot be categorised as a non-believer only because he commits sins, both major and minor sins.

Dr Muchlis also opined that most, if not all, the rulers of Muslim countries do not openly reject or undermine Islamic Sharia laws. They all still declare the shahadah and state that it is obligatory to practise Islam, and they do not prevent individuals of other faiths from performing their worship. Thus if there are shortcomings in implementing Sharia laws, they are a result of their ignorance and should be treated as such and not become a reason for labelling them as non-believers.

## **Is Islam under attack?**

Dr Muchlis argued that Al-Qaeda's justification of Israel and America as legitimate targets of violence and terrorism because they are the symbols of the Jews and Christians respectively is flawed. He argued that the Quran teaches us to be objective in assessing and interacting with the Jews and Christians as not all of them are always hostile towards Islam and Muslims. He cited several verses from the Quran to show that not all *Ahlul Kitab* (People of the Book) strive to make Muslims apostates. In the context of apostasy, not all of them (Jews and Christians) are the same. In particular, he opined that not understanding the context of a verse in relation to the causes and background of revelation often causes one to wrongly understand the Quran. For example, he cited:

“(Your enemies) will not cease to fight against you till they have turned you away from your faith” (Al-Baqarah : 217).

According to Dr Muchlis, the verse is mentioned in the context of Makkah polytheists who obstructed Muslims from embracing Islam and practising the faith by preventing them from entering Masjidil Haram; and who expelled the Prophet and the *Muhajireen* (emigrants) from their hometown (Makkah). Using the verse to argue that Jews and Christians are eternally hostile towards Muslims is therefore incorrect.

## **Is there religious conflict?**

Dr Muchlis said that the main source of conflict during Prophet Muhammad's time is not the

teaching of religion, but that of personal ambition, economic interest and politics albeit related to religion. For instance, he pointed out that international Zionism is an ideology born of European nationalism in the 19th century, not of Judaism (Roger Garaudy, *The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*). He draws several verses from the Quran to show that Muslims are asked to open

up their arms widely if there are parties initiating peace. He also stressed that the principle behind Muslim and non-Muslim relations is built on the premise of harmony and helping one another in furthering virtue. Therefore, there is no reason for eternal hostility and endless war towards one another.

**DELEGITIMISING AL-QAEDA'S NARRATIVE ON ARMED JIHAD: THE INTERPRETATION OF ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF JIHAD DRAWN FROM THE FATWA ON TERRORISM BY SHAYKH-UL-ISLAM PROFESSOR DR MUHAMMAD TAHIR UL-QADRI**

Ustaz Dr Hassan Mohiuddin Qadri



*Ustaz Dr Hassan Mohiuddin Qadri  
President, Supreme Council Minhaj ul-Quran International, Pakistan*

Dr Hassan Mohiuddin Qadri shared his perspectives on the concept of jihad and the means through which terrorists are misusing the concept and spreading wrong interpretations. He said that jihad is arguably one of the most misunderstood Islamic concepts in the Muslim and Western world and has become synonymous with the act of killing and fighting against non-Muslims. He added that it was important to clarify the misconceptions by providing a detailed analysis of jihad. He explained that jihad is an Arabic word from the root *jehada* which means to struggle or to strive. As such, jihad means struggling or striving in the way of God to counter the evil for the sake of good and betterment of the society. Jihad can be performed at different levels such as social, economic and political levels to eradicate evil and any other injustices.

***Understanding the Concept of Jihad***

He said the Quran can be studied in three ways, reading the text literally; studying the context

of the verse through study of previous and later verses; and understanding the historical background of the verses in the books of *tafsir*. In order to understand the concept of Jihad we need to understand its Quranic perspectives. The word jihad is discussed 36 times in the Quran and only four verses are talking about *Jihad bi Al-Qital*, which means fighting back aggression, tyranny, atrocities, terrorism and fighting in self-defense.

Dr Hassan Qadri further commented on the kinds of jihad and said *qital* is only one of the five ways of the jihad. In the Quran, the basic emphasis has been on other forms of jihad not on *qital*. Al-Qaeda and other terrorist group have erroneously focused on jihad as *qital*. Other ways of jihad include *Jihad Al-Nafs* (struggle for self-purification), *Jihad Al-Ilm* (academic and juristic efforts), *Jihad Al-Aml* (reformation of society through the political, education and cultural efforts) and *Jihad Al-Maal* (altruism and struggle for redistribution of the wealth to eliminate poverty). It is important to note

that the major emphasis is on "*Jihad Al-Nafs*" in Islam. Therefore, the struggle for self-purification is of utmost importance.

He pointed out that there is not a single verse in the Quran where the words '*jihad*' and '*qital*' have been used together. Despite Meccan's brutality, the Prophet (PBUH) never allowed his followers to take up arms in Mecca in the earlier period of Islam. For example, not a single verse on *qital* was revealed during the first 13 years of Islam.

### **Legitimacy of Jihad**

He underscored that there are five ways to go for just war in Islam:

- Just war is permitted in order to eliminate fitna and to restore peace and harmony.
- It is also allowed to help the oppressed whose human rights are being violated.
- It is only permitted in case a treaty of peace between two states is breached by one state and the state of war is resumed.
- There can be no killing of non-combatants such as children, women, farmers and monks. Therefore, suicide bombings against civilians are unlawful.
- There cannot be a transgression of limits during warfare.

Dr Hassan Qadri emphasised that the terrorists often use partial quotes of Qur'anic verses to advocate the killing of non-Muslims. In Islam, the state is the only legitimate authority to wage jihad and not individual groups. Therefore, in the minds of Muslims, these terrorists have nothing to do with Islam. They are simply manipulating the concepts of Islam in the minds of Muslims. This is emphasised further when the Prophet maintained alliance with the Christians and Jews when he established an Islamic state in Madinah.

In conclusion, he outlined the rebuttal against the philosophy of Al-Qaeda. He first explained that the terrorists believe that both Muslim and non-Muslim countries are places of *Darul Harb* (the abode of war) as they are at war with each other. Therefore, their aggression towards them is justified. He said that the concepts of "*Darul Harb*" and "*Darul Islam*" are not mentioned in the Quran and Hadiths. He concluded that the whole world is *Darul 'Ahd* (the abode of treaty) under the United Nations Charter. The whole international community has joined together to enter into a treaty of mutual peace under the United Nations, as members of the organisation. Everyone is bound to this charter, so it is an obligation to live in peace and to let others live in peace as well. This is all according to the Quran and Sharia.

## DISPUTING MILITANTS' UNDERSTANDING OF *AI-WALA' WAL-BARA* Ustaz Dr Mohamad Ali



*Ustaz Dr Mohamad Ali*  
Secretariat Member, Religious Rehabilitation Group and Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

In his presentation, Dr Mohamad Ali discussed the various aspects of the doctrine of *Al-Wala' wal-Bara'* (WB). He explained that this Islamic doctrine is prominent in the militants' ideology and therefore needs to be understood in its proper perspective. He spoke on various dimensions of *Al-Wala' wal-Bara'* and cautioned that the misinterpretation of this concept may lead to violence and extremism in the name of Islam.

### **Relationship between Muslims and Non-Muslims**

The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is one of the key issues in contemporary Islamic thought which has attracted much attention among Muslim scholars and within the community. The concept of *Al-Wala' wal-Bara'* is central to this discourse.

According to Dr Mohamad, *wala'* is understood as total loyalty to God and Muslims. This entails being loyal and attached to fellow Muslims, maintaining bonds of brotherhood with them, assisting them and empathising with them. On the other hand, *bara'* means total disassociation from anything that displeases God.

As a fundamental concept of Islam, *Al-Wala' wal-Bara'* clarifies the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim relationship. It also addresses questions such as how Muslims should perceive the non-Muslims, the appropriate code of conduct for Muslims to adopt in their interaction with non-Muslims and how Muslims can live side by side with non-Muslims.

Dr Mohamad explained that the extremists believe that *Al-Wala' wal-Bara'* is closely linked to the concept of *aqidah*, the pillar of Islamic belief. In his observation, *Al-Wala' wal-Bara'* in today's discourse can be divided into the *aqidah*, social, political and jihadi dimension. While the *aqidah* aspect of the concept is fundamental, the social aspect of it is mostly emphasised. This includes observing holidays and festivals of non-Muslims which are seen as imitating their morality and culture.

The militants stress upon the political aspect of *Al-Wala' wal-Bara'* and believe that full implementation of the Sharia laws should be upheld. They said that their loyalty is only to the Muslims rulers who practise the Sharia and those rulers who apply any "un-Islamic" system such as

democracy, nationalism and secularism should be disavowed. They demanded that Muslims should overthrow these rulers who follow “un-Islamic practices.” The jihadi dimension of *Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’* is closely related to the political dimension.

The extremists legitimise the use of violence against non-Muslims and those who have negated the true manifestation of the concept of *Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’*. According to Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi, the highest degree of showing enmity and hatred to the enemies of God shall be jihad against the Muslim rulers who follow these non-Islamic systems. Ayman Al-Zawahiri said in his book on *‘Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’* that the 9/11 attack were a *Ghazwah Mubarakah* (blessed raid). Zawahiri expressed his hatred and hostility towards the West and non-Muslims and stressed the importance to fight the infidels and Muslims who have deviated from the “true” *Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’*.

Dr Mohamad explained that this concept of *Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’* is also propagated by many non-violent Muslim scholars in their books at different levels. Most of these scholars agreed on the social dimension of the *Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’*. He added that the extremists believe that *Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’* is among the fundamentals of Islam and it is the message of all the messengers and prophets of God. However, this is a false claim. The pillar of Tawhid is the profession of Shahadah that there is no God but only Allah and Muhammad is his messenger, not *Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’*, as the militants proclaim. He further explained that the extremists

depiction of *Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’* as enmity towards the non-Muslim is completely against the true teachings of Islam. Hatred towards non-believers is not the practice of a true Muslim.

### **Mainstream and Extremist Mindsets**

Dr Mohamad then elaborated the different features of mainstream and extremists/jihadi mindsets. First, mainstream ideology is more balanced, inclusive and humane whereas the extremists’ jihadi ideology goes against humanity. Jihadist ideology is marginal in the sense that the ideology has the support of very few renowned scholars. On the other hand, mainstream ideology has the acceptance of most scholars with good sound tradition. Though jihadists may seem to be the loudest, most vocal and expressive group, their numbers are in reality very few. The mainstream view actually receives the support of the majority of Muslims.

In conclusion, Dr Mohamad noted that the militants’ interpretation of *Al-Wala’ wal-Bara’* has been widely disseminated in the Islamic world and in the cyberspace. Their understanding of the concept may lead to tension and conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims. Hence, the time has come for Muslim scholars and thinkers to develop and propagate an understanding of the concept based on Islamic principles and sources that promote peace and harmony between Muslims and people of other faiths.

## AN INTERNAL CRITIQUE OF AL-QAEDA

Professor Sherman Jackson



*Professor Sherman Jackson*

*King Faisal Chair of Islamic Thought and Culture and Professor of Religion and American Studies and Ethnicity,  
University of Southern California, USA*

Professor Sherman A. Jackson began by discussing the disparity in reactions towards violence perpetrated by sub-state and state actors. He observed that while the violence perpetrated by sub-state actors, such as Al-Qaeda, the Taliban or Hamas, is promptly denounced and condemned on the grounds of conventional morality, there is a tendency to legitimise the violence committed by modern states. He pointed out that modern states use violence as a legitimate means to help them attain their political ends while condemning all acts of violence committed by sub-state actors.

### **Major Arguments of Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmîyah**

In his presentation, Professor Jackson also discussed the Egyptian terrorist group, Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmîyah's own renunciation of political violence and critique of Al-Qaeda. He said that the most effective critique of sub-state actors would be from other sub-state actors who share the same basic ambitions, that is, to gain public recognition of Islam as a way of life and the freedom of Muslims to pursue it. Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmîyah's explicit

criticism of the violence perpetrated by Al-Qaeda is effective as it comes from those who do not speak in the name and interest of the state.

Professor Jackson presented the major arguments of the Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmîyah, an Egyptian group that was involved in numerous bloody confrontations in Egypt since the early 1990s, including the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981. On 5 July 1997, the incarcerated leadership of Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmîyah announced an unconditional, unilateral end to their violent campaigns, both inside and outside of Egypt. They also issued a series of "corrective manifestos," in which they set out to rectify the misunderstandings that had guided their violent actions of the past. All except one of the incarcerated leaders admitted that they had misunderstood jihad as an end in itself rather than a means. Based on this revised understanding, Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmîyah's leadership acknowledged that jihad should serve to protect Muslims' ability to guide humanity to God and as such, they were wrong to kill President

Sadat. Accordingly, they also proclaim that Al-Qaeda is wrong in declaring indiscriminate war on America and the West.

Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmiyah also acknowledged that in light of contemporary reality, including such facts as territorial sovereignty and a globally recognised right to freedom of religion, Islamic scriptures have to be processed from a contemporary perspective rather than an unchanging interpretation of pre-modern Islamic verses and Prophetic traditions on jihad. The Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmiyah leadership had come to realise that unlike the scriptures, the socio-political circumstances to which the scriptures apply to have changed. In this light, they conclude that their violent confrontations with the Egyptian state and society ultimately served no legitimate purpose. They explicitly state that all rulings and fatwâs must take into account two factors, namely, the reality on the ground and its implications and the Quran, the example of the Prophet or other recognised sources of Sharia.

Professor Jackson asserts that Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmiyah's basic critique of Al-Qaeda's violent actions lay with the latter's misinterpretation of the rules and purpose of jihad, as well as, its refusal to apply jihad with a 'principled religious pragmatism', taking into consideration its validity and effectiveness given the realities of the modern world. The group declared that Al-Qaeda's misapplication of jihad had led to consequences that undermine rather than serve the fundamental objectives of jihad itself. Furthermore, it asserts that Al-Qaeda's violent actions had turned the world against Islam instead of promoting its interests. At the same time, Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmiyah was also quick to point to the misdeeds and imperial pretensions of the West, especially America's bias in the Arab-Israeli conflict, its hypocritical, self-serving promotion of democracy, human rights, and the protection of religious minorities and women, not to mention its economic exploits and ambitions in the region.

### **Aims of Jihad**

Two pertinent issues Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmiyah had brought forth in its critique of Al-Qaeda are the killing of innocent non-combatants in jihad activities and the normative relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. Al-Gamâ'ah al-Islâmiyah denounces the indiscriminate killing of non-combatants and civilians as it noted that almost

all classical schools of Islamic law hold that the aim of jihad is to protect Muslims from aggression and it would not be legitimate to kill non-Muslims because they hold a different faith. In fact, Islamic law precludes aggression against those who are not involved in any actual fighting, especially women, children, the elderly, monks, farmers, the disabled. Additionally, Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmiyah rejects the idea that Muslims are religiously bound to presume hostility towards non-Muslims. Specifically, they criticise Al-Qaeda's standpoint that the West, and the United States in particular, are in a conspiracy to wipe out Islam and so Muslim and non-Muslim interests are permanently and mutually contradictory. They declare that Al-Qaeda must take the blame for turning the entire world against not only itself but also Islam. They noted that any perceived international conspiracy against Islam started after the 9/11 attacks and it is not true that American and Muslim interests are always in conflict. They pointed out that it was America who helped the mujahideen in Afghanistan to fight against the Soviets in the 1980s. The Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmiyah also argued that the notion that armed confrontation is the only acceptable relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims or the West and that treaties, truces and alliances amount to Islamic treason is unacceptable as historically the Prophet had made peace agreements with non-Muslims.

Professor Jackson concluded by emphasising three important points arising from Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmiyah's critique on Al-Qaeda. First, its critique of al-Qaeda is extremely valuable in that it constitutes an internal critique rather than an external one. It is, thus, more effective as it criticises Al-Qaeda not from the perspective of a hostile outsider, that is, a modern, secular state, who shares none of Al-Qaeda's ultimate goals but as 'insiders' whose dedication is first and foremost to Islam. Second, Al-Gamâ'ah Al-Islâmiyah's critique teaches us that there is a need to recognise the disquieting conflict that exists between our desire for peace and coexistence and the addiction to power and domination. Lastly, Professor Jackson opined that it is time to discard the notion that greater adherence to Islam would pose a danger to modern society.

## PANEL 6

### KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACING REHABILITATION INITIATIVES TODAY

#### PANELISTS

**Professor Arie Kruglanski**

Distinguished Professor of Psychology, University of Maryland, USA.

**Dr Jeffrey R. Halverson**

Assistant Research Professor, Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, Arizona State University, USA.

**Ms Rosleenda Mohamad Ali**

Head Psychologist and Manager, Counter Terrorism Operations Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore.

**Dr Douglas Stone**

Senior Advisor, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute.

*Chaired by Ustaz Dr Mohamad Ali, Secretariat Member, Religious Rehabilitation Group and Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*



*Panel 6 (From left): Dr Douglas Stone, Ms. Rosleenda Mohamad Ali, Ustaz Dr Mohamad Bin Ali, Dr Jeffrey R. Halverson, and Professor Arie Kruglanski*

## SIGNIFICANCE QUEST THEORY AS THE DRIVER OF RADICALISATION TOWARDS TERRORISM

Professor Arie Kruglanski



*Professor Arie Kruglanski  
Distinguished Professor of Psychology, University of Maryland, USA*

Professor Kruglanski noted that it was an opportune time to make an assessment of progress as the world was now in the 12th year of the War on Terror. He acknowledged that thus far, experts disagreed on the preliminary assessments made. The assessments comprised two distinct views. The optimistic view claims that major terrorists have been killed or apprehended and the logistics of Al-Qaeda have been dismantled. The sceptical view however points out that Al-Qaeda is like a hydra, with its franchises proliferating and radicalisation continuing to occur in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa and even Europe and the United States.

Quoting former United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Professor Kruglanski said that many have asked whether it is possible to kill and capture terrorists faster than they can proliferate. Professor Kruglanski suggested that what is more important than the answer is deciding whether killing and capturing terrorists ought to

be the primary aim in the first place. He quoted another American politician, former Governor of Massachusetts, Mitt Romney, who said we cannot kill our way out of this mess. In such a situation, Professor Kruglanski noted that the primary challenge would therefore be in reversing and preventing radicalisation.

### ***Definition and Process of Radicalisation***

Professor Kruglanski went on to address the definition of radicalisation from a psychological perspective. He said that a common definition of radicalisation is when individuals come to embrace radical or extreme behaviour. Radical behavior is behaviour that runs counter to universal human concerns and values such as survival, security, and protection of kin in pursuit of a given goal.

In addressing how radicalisation happens, Professor Kruglanski explained that radicalisation comes from an increased commitment to a focal goal that

is served by radical behavior. This commitment then devalues and decreases alternative concerns. Professor Kruglanski then highlighted two implications of the definition he posed. The first implication was that radicalisation was seen to be a subjective process and the second implication was that it occurs in degrees, wherein the degree of radicalisation reflects the relation between the importance of the focal goal and other concerns. To illustrate his point, Professor Kruglanski drew on examples of testimonies he had gathered from former members of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. One former Tamil Tiger explained that during his time with the group, family, friends, and finally even life completely lost importance in the light of the goals of the organisation.

Professor Kruglanski then moved on to discuss the notion of a person's quest for personal significance. Posing the question of what motivates terrorists, he noted that the existing literature had identified several different factors ranging from religion to vengeance. However, Professor Kruglanski said that underlying all these factors is one focal goal, which is the quest for personal significance. He explained that this quest is generally motivated by two factors: first, the loss (or threat of loss) of significance through individual stigmatisation or group humiliation and second, the opportunity for a gain in significance, which he identified as the incentive for terrorism. Once the quest for significance is aroused, ideology then provides the means to significance. Professor Kruglanski thus argued that while ideology is indeed important, its importance is only framed in terms of how it fulfils the quest for significance.

Case studies were used to show that there is a three-step process going from a sense of loss to the quest for significance and finally, the process

of radicalisation. The first case, based on samples from Egypt, Indonesia and Pakistan, established a link between personal failure and collectivism. People who have succeeded were identified as individuals while people who had more failures were identified by religion or nationality. Two other case studies, one from Southern Philippines and the other from Sri Lanka, also showed how the experience of humiliation and significance loss was linked to support for extremism and violence.

### ***Effectiveness of Deradicalisation Programmes***

Moving on to discuss deradicalisation, Professor Kruglanski distinguished between whether it occurs on its own or must be made to happen. He indicated that there were indeed spontaneous examples of deradicalisation in Egypt and Algeria, however deradicalisation has generally been facilitated through concerted programmes. Professor Kruglanski noted with regret that there is not much empirical data available to gauge the effectiveness of the deradicalisation programmes of Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Yemen, and Iraq. With regard to Sri Lanka, however, Professor Kruglanski highlighted that data was collected which indicated that those individuals who were rehabilitated had indeed experienced a reduced level of support for armed struggle. He did, however, note some of the difficulties in establishing an ideal control group.

Professor Kruglanski concluded his presentation with two key recommendations. First, that it is important to understand the nature of radicalisation and to use available theory and best practices in order to implement deradicalisation in a given context. Secondly, he highlighted the importance of carrying out research to have more empirical evidence of what works and what does not in order to create a "work-in-progress" approach towards the process of deradicalisation.

## THE WAR OF NARRATIVES IN 2013 AND BEYOND

Dr Jeffrey Halverson



*Dr Jeffrey Halverson*

*Assistant Research Professor, Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, Arizona State University, USA*

Dr Halverson's presentation highlighted the importance of narratives in the radicalisation process.

He defined the term "narrative" as a system of interrelated stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict or challenge. A story is not synonymous with a narrative but is a sub-unit of a narrative. Dr Halverson argued that narratives are important because of their ability to facilitate vertical integration, which is the incorporation of new local events into a pre-existing narrative system. To illustrate his point, he used the example of the Nakba narrative relating to the loss of Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel, which has had recent events such as the Israeli settlements incorporated into it.

### ***The Importance of Narratives***

Dr Halverson then moved on to address a key question – why are narratives important? He argued that humans process events as stories and generally have a deeper emotional connection with a narrative than an individual story. Furthermore, narratives can and will dictate how

current and future events are perceived and thus inform subsequent decisions.

He then outlined the concept of the War of Narratives, which is primarily composed of the U.S. "War on Terror" narrative versus the Al-Qaeda and Associated Movements' (AQAM) narrative of the "War on Islam". He then briefly summarised both narratives – the War on Terror which views 9/11 as an unprovoked attack that necessitated a response to the extremism of AQAM in defense of freedom and democracy and the War on Islam which perceives 9/11 as a defensive measure against the imperialist Crusader-Zionist alliance that seeks to subjugate and destroy Islam and prevent the establishment of Islamic emirates.

Addressing why these two narratives coexist, Dr Halverson offered several reasons. Firstly, they distill the complex into a simple binary. Each narrative appeals to emotion and also explains what actions to take. Furthermore, they both feature an "Other" as an aggressor, and tie in easily with existing narratives.

## ***Impact of the Obama Administration***

Dr Halverson ended his presentation by highlighting how the Obama presidency in 2008 and the Arab Spring had a significant impact on the War of Narratives. The initial shift occurred from the U.S. because Obama addressed the situation head on through the speeches in Cairo and Ankara in 2009 where he clearly stated that the U.S. was not engaged in a war on Islam. Obama made other changes: he ended official usage of the term “War

on Terror” in March 2009, withdrew US troops from Iraq by December 2011, oversaw the elimination of Osama Bin Laden and shifted the strategy to drones and precision strikes. The Arab Spring, on the other hand, effectively undermined the AQAM argument that armed struggle was necessary. It also brought Islamist parties to power through elections and disrupted the binary nature of the War of Narratives.

## CHALLENGES IN COUNSELING HARDCORE DETAINEES

Ms Rosleenda Mohamad Ali

Ms Rosleenda Mohamad Ali's presentation focused on the challenges faced by psychologists counselling hardcore Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) detainees in Singapore. It drew on analysis from psychological interviews with the detainees as well as findings from forensic psychological research.

### *Psychology of Hardcore Detainees*

Ms Rosleenda provided an overview of the psychology of hardcore JI detainees. A hardcore detainee is defined as an individual who is resistant to change and deeply entrenched in his radical or violent ideology. This ideology dominates to the point that it provides justification for and meaning to violence. Most of the hardcore detainees' cognitive distortions in relation to this rest on their perception of the enemy. These individuals also often position themselves as victims and the authorities as adversaries who relentlessly perpetuate injustices against them. The notion of being detained is seen as a transgression against them and against Islam, which exacerbates their hostile response to counselling and rehabilitation.

### *Religious-based Ideas*

She then demonstrated that the JI detainees drew on religious-based ideas imbibed during indoctrination in order to justify their use of violence. She focused on specific psychological concepts that show how these religious-based ideas altered the detainees' moral connection and led them to find meaning in violence as well as how they contribute to their strong resistance to counselling and rehabilitation.

Ms Rosleenda outlined 8 components in the mindset of hardcore detainees:

1. Rebellion: They tend to see themselves as victims of perceived injustice
2. Revulsion: Dislike of the secular environment and the belief that it is the root of sin
3. Revenge
4. Release of inhibition against killing: Cognitive restructuring of moral defenses against killing through dehumanising the victims and putting violence in the context of other goals
5. Retribution for not defending religion: Building of very broad categories of enemies – for example, anyone who does not defend Islam is an enemy.
6. Righteousness: Where only they know the "true" Islam.
7. Rewards in the afterlife
8. Resistance to rehabilitation: Not receptive to counselling, and holding on to the concept of taqdir (predestination) as an external source of rationalisation for their present situation and a means to absolve responsibility and control over their actions.

Ms Rosleenda concluded by noting that there is no easy way to counsel hardcore detainees based on the "8 Rs" she described that make up their mindset. She said that the role played by religious-based ideas in the hardcore detainees' justification for the use of violence necessitated religious counselling to debunk the JI's ideology. She acknowledged that rehabilitation in Singapore is a work-in-progress and that the authorities were always on the lookout for new ways to improve the process.

## CURRENT REHABILITATION INITIATIVES AND THE WAY FORWARD

Dr Douglas Stone



*Dr Douglas Stone*

*Senior Advisor, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)*

Dr Stone began his presentation by highlighting the fact that in order to know how to go forward with rehabilitation, it is important to understand where it has been first. He asked the audience if a conference of this nature would have been possible 12 years ago and noted that much had changed since then to enable the kind of discussion that is taking place now. Dr Stone then addressed the narrative of the “Global War on Terror”, pointing out that it did not make sense to have a war against terrorism because war is a tactic. He also argued that the fight against terrorism should not be viewed as a “long war” in an age where wars, should they even be desired, are short.

### **Experience in Iraq**

Recounting his experience in Iraq and managing the detention process there, Dr Stone noted that the system in place before his arrival was rudimentary and poorly organised. The prison had become a hotbed for recruitment, and with about 50,000 individuals detained there, approximately half the Iraqi population was directly related to

someone in that prison. This example underscored the broader importance of proper prisons management in the context of winning over the local population.

Dr Stone highlighted that one of the key challenges he faced then was 18% recidivism for released individuals due to the lack of a process to question, sort, understand and rehabilitate them. After a year of having the rehabilitation programme and new prison management system in place, the rate of recidivism went down to 1%. Commenting on the approach required towards rehabilitation of detainees, Dr Stone said that it was important to realise that the emphasis should be on providing conditions for the detainees to make the transformation away from extremism themselves rather than forcing it upon them.

This illustration from his own experience was used by Dr Stone to summarise what he felt was the central message of the conference - that force and violence that

force and violence, while it has a role, is nevertheless insignificant in the real business of affecting the hearts and minds of a population – what he calls the “battlefield of the mind.” Expanding on this concept, Dr Stone argued that there was a tug-of-war between extremists and those who fought them to bring the rest of society over to their point of view.

### **Way Forward**

Dr Stone also shared his thoughts on the notion that rehabilitation initiatives should become a global phenomenon. He suggested that rehabilitation is beginning to move out from being focused on violent Islamist extremists to other kinds of violent extremists across the spectrum. To this effect, Dr Stone described the success of the Global Counter Terrorism Forum that took place in June 2012 and brought together 48 countries to write and sign the Rome Memorandum on Good Practices

for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders. This is a set of 25 ways that the 48 countries would collaborate on and was an unprecedented event in international cooperation on counter-terrorism. The Rome Memorandum was also adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

In the final component of his presentation, Dr Stone emphasised the importance of involving the detainees’ families in the rehabilitation process. Dr Stone urged that future conferences feature their perspectives. Secondly, he also noted the effectiveness of using former extremists in providing counter-narratives. Additionally, Dr Stone said that it was crucial to engage the younger generation to ensure continuity. Dr Stone ended his presentation reiterating the call for more leaders from different countries to join the rehabilitation initiative and for their programmes to take measurement of results seriously.

## CLOSING REMARKS



*Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi Hassan (left) and Professor Rohan Gunaratna*

### **Professor Rohan Gunaratna**

*Professor of Security Studies and Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

Professor Gunaratna reiterated that the purpose of the conference was to celebrate the contributions of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) in Singapore and also to chart the global strategy towards terrorist rehabilitation and community engagement over the next 10 years. Moving forward, he suggested several areas of collaboration.

First, build and maintain a common repository of information on terrorist rehabilitation and community engagement. Professor Gunaratna highlighted that the inaugural International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation in 2009 led to the establishment of the p4peace platform. He urged participants to contribute and to harness this valuable resource.

Second, exchange personnel between specialist bodies. Professor Gunaratna emphasised that specialist centres in prevention, terrorist rehabilitation, and community engagement should consider exchanging personnel for periods of time.

Third, conduct joint training to build global terrorist rehabilitation and community resilience capabilities and capacities. Professor Gunaratna encouraged interested parties to engage in joint activities with such specialist centres on the design, development and assessment of rehabilitation and engagement initiatives.

Fourth, share experience, expertise and resources to improve existing and build new capacities and capabilities in other countries. Professor Gunaratna said organisations with an abundance of the above resources should share more widely.

With a shift from cooperation to collaboration, Professor Gunaratna said the number of terrorist

rehabilitation programmes is likely to double in the next decade. Comparing the interest in the inaugural terrorist rehabilitation Conference in 2009 to the interest this year, Professor Gunaratna highlighted that the increase from 220 participants in 2009 to 500 participants in 2013 indicated an increasing interest in the use of soft power. The participation of 84 foreign participants from 23 different countries also shows global inclination towards the use of 'smart' power.

Drawing on the experience of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), he said the governments of Nigeria, Somaliland, Kenya and Tajikistan had expressed an interest in seeking assistance to create counter-terrorism rehabilitation and community engagement programmes.

Professor Gunaratna then proceeded to focus on the importance of cooperation with religious institutions. He said that 70 – 80% of the conflicts in the world were ethnic and religious in nature and pointed out that the misunderstanding of religion and ethnicity was what contributed to conflict. Religion is not violent, but frequently exploited

as mobilising tools by terrorists to create conflict. Thus, future security should not be restricted to the domain of security and law enforcement agencies, instead it should be widened to include community leaders and religious leaders to help facilitate greater understanding of the problem.

Professor Gunaratna concluded his remarks by expressing appreciation for the contributions of fellow academics and government officials towards the conference. He also expressed his gratitude to the clerics and staff of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) who pioneered the concepts and practices in Singapore and beyond as well as the Muslim community for showing their solidarity and support to protect their community from extremism and terrorism.

As a non-Singaporean, he paid tribute to RRG and the Muslim community of Singapore, stating that Muslims realised that terrorism is harming their great heritage of moderation, tolerance and co-existence. He recalled the comments by the Prime Minister that Singapore remained secure because of the commitment of all communities of Singapore to a peaceful coexistence.



*Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi Hassan  
Co-Chairman, Religious Rehabilitation Group, Singapore*

In his closing remarks, Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi Hassan reiterated the valuable lessons learned and experience gained by RRG since its inception 10 years ago. He acknowledged that the conference, with its lively discussions among experts in their respective fields, had given the RRG useful insights and inspiration to move forward.

The RRG is determined to counter terrorist and radical ideology and promote the virtues of moderation and tolerance as required by Islam.

Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi shared a verse from the Quran to illustrate his point by stating that Allah had decreed for the qualities of moderation to be observed by faithful Muslims, and it is not to be infringed and ignored as mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143 and Surah Al-Anbiya verse 107 respectively:

*“Thus have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves.”  
(Al-Baqarah:143)*

*“We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all Universe.”  
(Al-Anbiya:107)*

He argued that based on these verses, it was wrong for any acts of terrorism or extremism to be carried out in the name of Islam or any other religion.

Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi concluded his remarks by expressing RRG’s sincere gratitude and appreciation to the government and its related agencies, Malay-Muslim organisations and institutions and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies for the support in its efforts to counter extremist ideology in Singapore and to those who have worked hard in making the conference achieved its desired objectives.

## PROGRAMME

### **MONDAY, 25 MARCH 2013**

6.00 pm – 6.30 pm

REGISTRATION AND WELCOME RECEPTION  
(BY INVITATION ONLY)

6.30 pm – 8.30 pm

WELCOME ADDRESS AND DINNER

Ambassador Barry Desker, Dean, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

### **TUESDAY, 26 MARCH 2013**

8.30 am – 9.15 am

BREAKFAST AND REGISTRATION

9.30 am – 10.00 am

#### **WELCOME REMARKS**

Ambassador Barry Desker, Dean, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Ustaz Ali Haji Mohamad, Co-Chairman, Religious Rehabilitation Group, Singapore

10.00 am – 11.15 am

#### **PANEL 1 - THE STATE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM, REHABILITATION AND COMMUNITY COUNTER-IDEOLOGY EFFORTS**

##### ***An Update on the Global Terrorism Landscape***

President of Howard's Global Solutions, Director of Monterey Terrorism Research and Education Program and Adjunct Professor, Monterey Institute of International Studies, USA

##### ***Global Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Engagement Programmes: The State of the Art***

Professor Rohan Gunaratna, Professor of Security Studies and Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

*Chaired by Prof. Rohan Gunaratna, Professor of Security Studies and Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

11.15 am – 11.30 am

SCREENING OF VIDEO "ONE VOICE"

11.30 am

ARRIVAL OF GUEST-OF-HONOUR, PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG

11.30 am – 11.35 am

#### **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

Ambassador Barry Desker, Dean, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

## **PROGRAMME**

11.35 am – 12.20 pm

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND BOOK LAUNCH**

Guest-of-Honour, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

### **LAUNCH OF BOOK COMMEMORATING THE RRG'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY**

### **SCREENING OF THE RRG'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY VIDEO**

12.40 pm – 1.45 pm

### **LUNCH AND SCROLL PRESENTATION BY INTER-RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION**

2.00 pm – 3.45 pm

### **PANEL 2 - REHABILITATION INITIATIVES**

#### ***Saudi Arabia's Initiative: Efforts in Countering Radicalisation***

Dr Abdul Rahman Al Hadlaq, General Director, Ideological Security Directorate, Ministry of the Interior, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

#### ***Indonesia's Initiative: Rehabilitation of Former Terrorists in Prison***

Professor Irfan Idris, Director of Deradicalisation, National Counter-Terrorism Agency, Indonesia

#### ***Singapore's Initiative: Singapore's Terrorist Rehabilitation Approach - A 10-year Winning Hearts and Minds Journey***

Ustaz Mohamad Feisal Mohamad Hassan, Secretariat Member, Religious Rehabilitation Group and Associate Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

#### ***Challenges of Rehabilitation Initiatives***

Mr Ali Soufan, Chief Executive Officer, The Soufan Group, USA

*Chaired by Prof. Rohan Gunaratna, Professor of Security Studies and Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

3.45 pm – 4.15 pm

TEA BREAK

4.15 pm – 6.00 pm

### **PANEL 3 - COMMUNITY COUNTER-IDEOLOGY EFFORTS**

#### ***A Community Counter-Ideology Response - Strategies to Reach Out to the Youth***

Mr Thomas Samuel, Director, Research and Publications Division, Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia

#### ***Community Counter-Ideology Efforts in Singapore***

Ustaz Dr Muhammad Haniff Hassan, Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

## **PROGRAMME**

4.15 pm – 6.00 pm

### ***Deconstruction of Radical Ideologies and Detainee Reintegration***

Ms Malkanthi Hettiarachchi, Clinical Psychologist, Foundation for Reconciliation, Sri Lanka

### ***Efforts to Promote Religious Moderation Among Muslim Youths in the UK***

Sheikh Musa Admani, University Imam, City University London, UK

*Chaired by Associate Professor Bilveer Singh, Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore and Adjunct Senior Fellow, Centre of Excellence for National Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

End of Day 1 Conference

6.30 pm – 9.00 pm

DINNER FOR SPEAKERS AND GUESTS  
(BY INVITATION ONLY)

## **WEDNESDAY, 27 MARCH 2013**

8.00 am – 8.45 am

BREAKFAST AND REGISTRATION

8.45 am – 10.45 am

### **PANEL 4 – ISLAM AGAINST EXTREMISM - MODERATION IN ISLAM AND RELIGIOUS HARMONY**

#### ***Promoting Religious Harmony***

Dr Mustafa Ceric, President, World Bosniak Congress, Former Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina

#### ***Promoting Interfaith Understanding***

Dr Mohamad Fatris Bakaram, Mufti of Singapore

#### ***The Concept of Wasatiyyah and the Significance of Islamic Moderation***

Tan Sri Professor Dr Mohd. Kamal Hassan, Distinguished Professor, International Islamic University Malaysia

#### ***Islam Against Extremism***

Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, Chairman, Cordoba Initiative, New York, USA

*Chaired by Dr Albakri Ahmad, Dean, MUIS Academy, Islamic Religious Council of Singapore*

10.45 am – 11.15 am

TEA BREAK

11.15 am – 1.15 pm

### **PANEL 5 – CHALLENGING AL-QAEDA'S NARRATIVE OF HATE AND VIOLENCE**

#### ***Repudiating Al-Qaeda's Narrative on Takfir and Conspiracy against Islam***

Dr Muchlis M. Hanafi, Director Research for Quranic Studies, Religious Affairs Department, Indonesia

## **PROGRAMME**

11.15 am – 1.15 pm

### ***Delegitimising Al-Qaeda's Narrative on Armed Jihad:***

#### ***The Interpretation of Islamic concept of Jihad drawn from the Fatwa on Terrorism by Shaykh-ul-Islam***

Ustaz Dr Hassan Mohiuddin Qadri, President, Supreme Council Minhaj ul-Quran International, Pakistan

### ***Disputing Militants' Understanding of Al-Wala' wal-Bara'***

Ustaz Dr Mohamad Ali, Secretariat Member, Religious Rehabilitation Group and Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

### ***An Internal Critique of Al-Qaeda***

Professor Sherman Jackson (Abdul Hakim Jackson), King Faisal Chair of Islamic Thought and Culture and Professor of Religion and American Studies and Ethnicity, University of Southern California, USA

*Chaired by Dr Abdul Rahman Al Hadlaq, Director of Counter-Ideological Unit, Ministry of the Interior, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*

1.15 pm – 2.30 pm

LUNCH

2.30 pm – 4.30 pm

## **PANEL 6 – KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACING REHABILITATION INITIATIVES TODAY**

### ***Significant Quest Theory as the Driver of Radicalisation Towards Terrorism***

Professor Arie Kruglanski, Distinguished Professor of Psychology, University of Maryland, USA

### ***The War of Narratives in 2013 and Beyond***

Dr Jeffrey R. Halverson, Assistant Research Professor, Hugh Downs School of Human Communication, Arizona State University, USA

### ***Challenges in Counselling Hardcore Detainees***

Ms Rosleenda Mohamad Ali, Head Psychologist and Manager, Counterterrorism Operations Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore

### ***Current Rehabilitation Initiatives and Going Forward***

Dr Douglas Stone, Senior Advisor, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)

*Chaired by Ustaz Dr Mohamad Ali, Secretariat Member, Religious Rehabilitation Group and Research Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore*

## **PROGRAMME**

4.30 pm – 5.00 pm

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Professor Rohan Gunaratna, Professor Security Studies and Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi Hassan, Co-Chairman, Religious Rehabilitation Group, Singapore

End of Day 2 Conference

6.30 pm – 9.00 pm

**CLOSING DINNER FOR SPEAKERS AND GUESTS  
(BY INVITATION ONLY)**

## ABOUT RRG

The Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) is a voluntary group of Islamic scholars and teachers in Singapore formed in 2003 to assist in counselling and rehabilitating detained members of the regional terrorist group, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). RRG's mission is to correct the detainees' misunderstanding of Islamic concepts and dispel the extremist and terrorist ideology they have been indoctrinated with.

Since 2003, the RRG has been counselling JI detainees with the aim of helping them to understand the true teachings and message of Islam. Counselling sessions are conducted with the detainees to provide them with opportunities to explore their ideological paradigm and the factors binding them to the JI and its militant ideology. RRG counsellors work with these detainees, presenting them with teachings from the Quran and Hadith to help them see the flaws in their beliefs and allegiance to JI and militant ideas of terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda. Besides JI detainees, this rehabilitation process is also extended to others detained for terrorism-related activities as well as their families.

Besides its primary counselling and rehabilitation work, the RRG is also actively involved in building community resilience through its outreach programmes. Since 2005, the RRG has organised forums, dialogue sessions and briefings to educate the community on key Islamic concepts which have been often misinterpreted and misrepresented by terrorist and extremist groups such as the JI and Al-Qaeda. The RRG has also published booklets to counter the terrorist and extremist interpretations of Islamic concepts and launched its website and its Facebook page to expand its outreach efforts.

For more information on RRG, please visit [www.rrg.sg](http://www.rrg.sg).

## ABOUT RSIS

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) was established in January 2007 as an autonomous School within the Nanyang Technological University (NTU). RSIS mission is to be a leading research and graduate teaching institution in strategic and international affairs in the Asia-Pacific. To accomplish this mission, RSIS will:

- provide a rigorous professional graduate education in international affairs with a strong practical and area emphasis
- conduct policy-relevant research in national security, defence and strategic studies, diplomacy and international relations
- collaborate with like-minded schools of international affairs to form a global network of excellence

RSIS teaching programme consists of the Master of Science (MSc) degrees in Strategic Studies, International Relations, International Political Economy and Asian Studies as well as The Nanyang MBA (International Studies) offered jointly with the Nanyang Business School and the NTU-Warwick Double Masters Programme which seeks to provide an educational platform articulating the economic, political, social and strategic influences impacting on Asia and the Western world.

Research at RSIS is conducted by five constituent institutes and centres: the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS) and the Temasek Foundation Centre for Trade & Negotiations (TFCTN). The focus of research is on issues relating to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and their implications for Singapore and other countries in the region.

For more information on RSIS, please visit [www.rsis.edu.sg](http://www.rsis.edu.sg)

## ABOUT ICPVTR

The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) is a specialist centre within the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. ICPVTR conducts research, training and outreach programmes aimed at reducing the threat of politically motivated violence and at mitigating its effects on the international system.

Its core objectives are:

- To conduct sustained research and analyses of terrorist, guerrilla, militia, and extremist political groups and their support bases. To identify the strengths and weaknesses of international, state and societal responses in managing the threat of political violence.
- To provide high-quality instruction and training for officials and future leaders engaged in combating terrorism and other forms of political violence.
- To advise governments and inform societies affected by political violence on how best to manage the current and evolving threat.

For more information on ICPVTR,  
visit: [www.pvtr.org.sg](http://www.pvtr.org.sg)







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