



TRAINING COURSE ON PREVENTING RADICALIZATION AND EXTREMISM LEADING TO TERRORISM IN AFRICA (PRELT)

Based on Rules and Ethics of War and Peace in Islamic Sharia



Background

The international community has gained considerable experience in addressing terrorism during the last two decades. Today, three major lessons stand out. First, security-based counterterrorism measures are necessary, but not sufficient. Second, there is a pressing need to invest in a preventive approach, rather than a reactive one. Third, local communities can and should play an important role in preventing radicalization and extremism leading to terrorism.

Radicalization and extremism leading to terrorism are complex phenomena that do not occur in a vacuum. Terrorist organizations tap into real or perceived political, economic, social, cultural and historical grievances to recruit followers. And while terrorism cannot, and should not, be associated with any religion, nationality or civilization, it is clear that false interpretations of all religions have long been an integral part of extremist narratives of intolerance and violence.

Course Objective

The PRELT training course at CCCPA is the first of its kind in Africa. It seeks to empower local community leaders and influencers to prevent radicalization and recruitment to terrorist organizations within their communities. The course provides trainees with the knowledge and skills to construct and deliver inclusive peace narratives, including those based on Islamic Sharia.

Training Modules

CCCPA's PRELT course is based on interactive and practical group work, covering the following modules:

- **Understanding Radicalization through Conflict Analysis.** This module enables participants to develop their own lens through which they can see the wider context surrounding radicalization and terrorism. The module helps participants identify actors, roots causes, triggers and dynamics that give rise to or exacerbate conflict, with a particular emphasis on the role of terrorist organizations. It also

helps participants to identify and use pillars and narratives of peace in their local communities and to prevent radicalization and extremism.

- **Rules and Ethics of War and Peace in Islam.** This module is the cornerstone of the training course. It provides a basic understanding of Islamic Sharia. In particular, the module addresses several Islamic concepts most notably *jihad*, *takfir*, *hakimiyya* and *jahiliyya*. It also fleshes out the rules and ethics of war in Islam (protection of civilians, the prohibition of suicide bombing, etc.) and emphasizes coexistence and tolerance as central Islamic values. The narratives in this module draw on the practices of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions in Mecca, Medina and Abyssinia.
- **Deconstructing and Refuting Terrorist Narratives.** Through “content analysis” of propaganda material (videos, speeches, and publications) of terrorist organizations, this module help trainees understand how terrorist narratives and messages are constructed, including the way they frame the conflict and how they implicate religion in it. This is contrasted every step of the way with the tolerant teachings and interpretations of Islam, as outlined in the previous module. The module hence illustrates terrorists’ selective interpretation of the Quran and Sunna and their manipulation of *usul al-fiqh* (Discursive Nature of Islamic Law) to cast a false legitimacy on their use of violence.
- **Individual Pathways to Terrorism.** This module approaches radicalization as an individualized journey that involves complex, personal and community-based push and pull factors.
- **Developing Alternative Narratives and Messages.** This module builds on all previous modules to empower participants to start formulating their very own alternative, positive and inclusive messages of peace and tolerance, rooted in Islamic Sharia and community traditions.

Current Status and Next Steps

CCCPA has conducted two pilot trainings that saw the participation of 45 local community actors from Somalia on 4-7 September and on 8-22 September 2016. In the coming months, CCCPA will be organizing additional training courses designed for local community actors from Nigeria. The Center also plans to deliver an advanced training course specifically conceived for African imams and religious scholars and actors.

While the current scope of the training remains Somalia and Nigeria, CCCPA plans to expand it to include other affected regions in the African continent, namely the Sahel, Sahara and North Africa regions.

