

DOCUMENTATION

of a breakfast discussion at the 54th Munich Security Conference on

**Strategies against Terrorism and Violent Extremism:
Military and Civilian Perspectives.
Insights from Mindanao, Philippines, and Iraq**

**hosted by Forum Civil Peace Service (forumZFD) and
MISEREOR, the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation
for Development Cooperation,
in cooperation with the project group
'Changing the Munich Security Conference'**

The breakfast discussion aimed at fostering dialogue about how international civilian and military actors as well as civil society actors can contribute to preventing violent extremism and terrorism and at defining the key lessons learned from practical experience with the agendas to counter and prevent violent extremism.

The breakfast discussion offered insights from on the ground in Iraq – where recently a military defeat of the 'Islamic State' (Daesh) was announced and a UN conference in Kuwait focused on the needs to rebuild the country – and from Mindanao, Philippines, a region that has seen over 40-years of violent struggle for autonomy by a Muslim minority, and a region where the 'Islamic State' and other extremist groups have been gaining ground recently.

Introduction to the topic by Prof. Dr. Herbert Wulf

Prof. Dr. Herbert Wulf is former Director of the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC)

The new challenge of providing security in the face of terrorism and violent extremism

In contrast to previous decades, the number of interstate wars and violent conflicts, and the number of deaths resulting from them, has decreased. The main security threats today are intra- and sub-state conflicts, often accompanied by terrorist attacks and violent extremism – mostly targeting civilians.

Public fear of terrorism has led governments to make counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism (CVE) top priorities – on both domestic and international fronts. A recent World Bank study underlines that states are increasingly expected to respond to several security threats simultaneously. We can call this a new and a widened security agenda.

What are the results of programmes acting to counter terrorism and violent extremism?

So far, programmes to counter violent extremism have focussed primarily on opposing what is defined as extremist groups, and do too little to change the behaviour of the other actors responsible for conflict.

Tough security measures by both national and international actors to combat such groups continue to dominate. There are many historical examples showing that violent action against militant groups fuelled their growth rather than wiping them out. A recent study by the international NGO Safer World concludes: 'In many contexts the biggest challenges and conflict risks are posed not by "violent extremists" but by injustice, discrimination and poor governance.'

The World Bank study acknowledges a growing recognition that security-focused interventions may have limited effect in countering the grievances; additionally, aid may often fuel expansion of violent extremist groups.

The UNDP study entitled 'Journey to Extremism in Africa' provides startling new evidence of just how directly counter-productive security-driven responses can be when conducted insensitively. A striking 71 per cent of recruits pointed to 'government action', including the killing or arrest of a family member or friend, as the incident or 'tipping point' that prompted them to join a terrorist or extremist group.

These findings suggest that a dramatic reappraisal of state security-focused interventions is urgently required, including more effective oversight of human rights compliance, rule of law and state accountability.

Addressing the root causes of the problem

The 2015 United Nations Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism urges the global community of states to pay closer attention to the root causes and drivers of violent extremism, after decades of overconcentration on militarised approaches.

One of the few empirical studies, the aforementioned UNDP study on Africa, looked at the significance of religion as a reason for joining violent extremist groups. Fifty-seven per cent of

former extremists admitted to limited or no understanding of religious texts. Indeed, higher than average years of religious schooling appears to have been a source of resilience to extremism. These findings challenge rising Islamophobic rhetoric that has intensified in response to violent extremism globally. Clearly ideology plays a role: But we should not forget that research has questioned the link between religious ideology and participation in violent groups – and pointed to real grievances: marginalisation, oppression, lack of resources, grievances against security actors, failures in governance, rising inequality, alienation due to rapid social and cultural change, and lack of inclusive development.

The UN programme to prevent violent extremism (PVE) has gradually worked its way onto the development agenda and now seems set to become a permanent fixture. Just as violent extremism profoundly impacts the attainment of development goals, so the search for solutions must also place development approaches at its centre. But initiatives that focus exclusively on state capacity-building run the risk of perpetuating malign power structures, which are overt drivers of violent extremist recruitment. Even worse: Using aid programmes to counter terrorists and support a war effort can not only alienate the local population, but can also make aid agencies a target of attack.

In regard to civic participation: In the absence of ‘state legitimacy’, research suggests that improved public policy and delivery of good governance by governments confronted with violent extremism will ultimately represent a far more effective source of counter-terrorism and PVE than continued overconcentration on security-focused interventions.



Sven Reuter (forumZFD), Prof. Dr. Herbert Wulf, Thomas Antkowiak (MISEREOR) and Archimandrite Emanuel Youkhana at the 54th Munich Security Conference. Photo: MISEREOR

Insights from Mindanao, Philippines

Statement by Datu Mussolini Sinsuat Lidasan

Datu Mussolini Sinsuat Lidasan is Executive Director of the Al Qalam Institute for Islamic Identities and Dialogue in Southeast Asia at Ateneo de Davao University, and member of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, appointed by the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

The context of violent extremism and terrorism in the Philippines is not just about ideology and not just about people who are encouraged to do violence. If we want to understand the origins of violence in the southern part of the Philippines, we need to talk about the grievances of the people there. These grievances are rooted in the history of the southern parts of the Philippines.

The struggle for self-determination of the Muslim people in the southern Philippines, the Bangsamoro, has a long history of almost 300 years. It started with the arrival of the Spaniards in the 16th century, followed through after the arrival of the Americans, and eventually continued with the Philippine government from the 1930s to the present.

The Bangsamoro Peace Process formally started in the 1960s between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), followed by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

These groups have different narratives than that of the terrorists of 9/11, for example. Their fight started with the struggle for the right to self-determination. It is a sovereignty-based struggle.

However these two groups, the MNLF and the MILF, have agreed to peace talks with the Philippine government. They are no longer recognised as terrorist groups.

Today, we look back on four decades of the peace process and more than 20 years of formal peace talks with the MNLF and the MILF. During this long peace process, new violent groups have emerged at the community level.

During the Afghan War in the 1980s and 1990s, many Philippine Muslims were trained in Afghanistan and helped their Muslim brothers in Afghanistan to fight the Russians. These were the early foreign-trained 'freedom fighters' – as they called themselves. When they returned to the Philippines they were dissatisfied with the ongoing peace talks and organised another group known today as Abu Sayyaf.

They continue to pursue the goal of granting the Bangsamoro people the right to self-determination. However their roots today are more complex; thus they refer to global jihad. The government continues its attempts to fight and subdue Abu Sayyaf, but the conflict has remained unresolved to date.

In 2008 a new armed group emerged: the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters – a splinter group of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. The main motive for the group's separation was the failure of the peace talks in 2008 – when the signing of an agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front on the Bangsamoro autonomy failed.

Recently, within the last two years, new armed groups have emerged as the result of new grievances experienced in the violent conflict.

Based on our studies, there are three main drivers for the thriving of violent extremism in this part of the world:

1. Sense of identity: People are not sure whether they are Bangsamoro or Filipino. This confusion of identities is in fact a testimony of historical injustice that has not been properly addressed for years, decades or even centuries.

2. Sense of belonging: The Bangsamoro people feel that they are a minority, that they are discriminated against and that there is no place for them in the Philippine Republic.

3: Sense of purpose: People's sense of purpose tends to be based on their religious belief. They are inclined to commit violent acts in the name of the religion, because of some sort of realisation, self-actualisation of having a main purpose in life.

These three drivers are complex in terms of how they revolve around each community.

My way of addressing it is not only through military interventions. We need to have a political solution for resolving the underlying conflicts. We need to provide space for dialogue for each community and we need to bridge the gap of sectarian violence and even other forms of violence.

At Al Qalam Institute we have endeavoured to focus on youths, to empower them, give them proper prospects for life, and do so actively through non-violence that enables them to address their legitimate grievances.

I am now a commissioner in the Bangsamoro Transition Commission: Our task as commissioners is to draft the Bangsamoro Basic Law in congress, to finally put an end to the war in the southern part of the Philippines.



A poster in Mindanao, Philippines in support of the peace process.

Photo: MISEREOR

Insights from Iraq

Statement by Father Emanuel Youkhana

Archimandrite Emanuel Youkhana from Dohuk, Northern Iraq, is a high-ranking priest in the Assyrian Church of the East and Executive Director of the NGO CAPNI (Christian Aid Program Northern Iraq).

The post-2003 situation in Iraq, after the former regime had been toppled through military operations, clearly demonstrated that in our fight against terror using military means or security measures may cause us to win a battle but lose the war. This is what we experienced in post-2003 Iraq, when the Iraqi government ignored the role and impact of peaceful co-existence and failed to respond positively to the fair demands of marginalised communities and territories. Mutual respect and respect for the diversity in Iraq went by the wayside, and education and media were neglected. While ignoring these factors and relying mainly on security solutions had led to the defeat of Al-Qaida (for example), it formed the breeding ground for ISIS. Indeed, the security solutions backfired.

In the current post-ISIS situation we are facing the same challenges. The Iraqi central government continues to deal with the situation through military and security means. There are, for instance, no roundtable discussions, no conferences, no national debates or similar initiatives carried out or planned to address questions such as: Why did we have the conflict? How can we deal with the root causes and outcomes? How can we keep them from recurring? There is a crucial need in Iraq today to build peace infrastructures and launch a nationwide debate in which religious leaders from different nominations and confessions, community representatives, civil society organisations, etc., can participate. 'Nothing about me without me' needs to become reality in peace-building efforts in Iraq.

In the process of peace building, the direct participation of community individuals, families, formal and informal leaders, religious leaders at all levels and from all denominations and confessions is crucial, as the feeling of peace comes about within an individual person. In order to build long-lasting peace, we should be building awareness and acceptance levels of each other in the community. To achieve this goal, we should focus on young people from various ethnic groups as well as on religious groups. This will make us more effective through workshops, seminars, campaigns and intergenerational interactions, etc. We also have to work with victims and their families towards reconciliation and peaceful co-existence.

Religious groups and their leaders should play a vital role through their institutions, following the human rights and development agenda for the whole community and the country. Other very important groups that we need to be working with are decision-makers, lawmakers and political leaders. Actions have to be taken at various levels. Introducing minority rights would be one important aspect of implementing a coherent human rights and development perspective. The international community and international organisations, in particular the UN, can and should provide the expertise and work with the country leaders; non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) should approach the target groups within their reach.

In order to establish lasting peace and peaceful co-existence of people in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious Iraq, individuals need to again accept differences among various ethnic groups and religions and be able to live alongside each other peacefully. However, individual change alone will not be enough. Individuals need to engage to change institutions and societal structures for lasting peace.



**We might be helpless but never hopeless.
Help us keeping The Hope Alive
Help us realizing our children's hopes to paint and plant flowers**

Foto: CAPNI. Foto and quote taken from a Power Point presentation by Father Emanuel Youkhana, at a Misereor meeting in Munich, 17 February 2018

Iraq needs visionary leaders with clear strategies to bring about peace: peace in the minds of people at all levels, to realise the dream of having a peaceful country. In our context in Iraq, high-level sophisticated advocacy, lobbying and pressure are needed to start up the process in this respect – instead of relying on military solutions.

The national Iraqi government, its partners and the international community (UN institutions, international humanitarian and development organisations) should **coordinate their efforts** to come up with a **comprehensive peace agenda for the rehabilitation of the country**. Coherence and coordination of international aid is necessary, and programming, nationally and internationally, needs to be (more) fluid und flexible, in order to be able to respond to reality, the political climate and shifting institutional capacities.

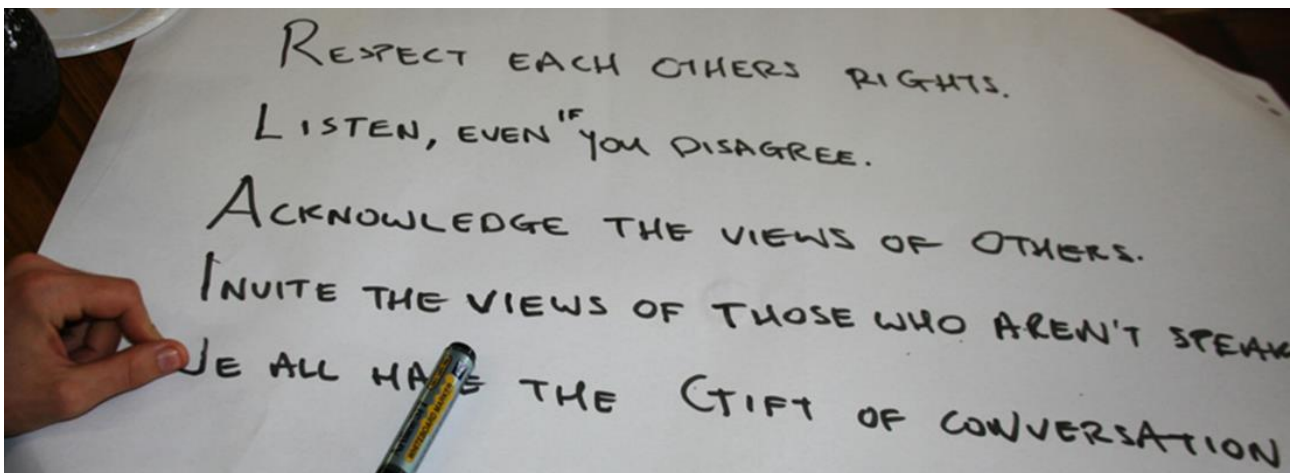
All stabilisation and reconstruction efforts in the context of protracted conflict should follow human rights principles. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda should serve as roadmaps for immediate efforts to bring about **stability, security and state building**,

including a coherent planning for **economic recovery**. Early economic recovery is vital. Strategic planning is required in order to arrive at a 'good enough development', ensuring a willingness to spend money to secure the peace dividend and in ways that serve the important short-term goal of stability, as well as the sustainability of recovery.

Iraq also needs **constitutional reform**. Many ethnic and religious groups and people belonging to certain denominations or confessions experience discrimination (e.g. the Yezidi). Minority rights are not respected. The constitution and its application need urgent revision for implementing equal citizenship.

Furthermore, Iraq needs **educational reform**. Education can provide powerful leverage for peace building: the current curricula need to be reformed in order to address non-violence, tolerance and peaceful co-existence – from early childhood up to higher education. Education should go hand in hand with the promotion of young people: we need to develop their capacities and encourage them to take the initiative for tolerance and plurality in society.

To achieve lasting peace in Iraq, it will not be enough to invest in material infrastructure - despite the fact that it is very important and must not be neglected. However, Iraq also needs **social reform**. We need to establish intra- and inter-faith platforms as well as other appropriate instruments for dialogue. And we need to promote a positive role of the media (e.g. through campaigns for equality among all citizens). All efforts in rebuilding the country have to be embedded in social peace building in order to set the stage for a transitional justice process.



Rules participants at a PaCSIA peacebuilding workshop had given themselves for their dialogues.
Foto: PaCSIA (Peace & Conflict Studies Institute Australia)

Final Remarks

by Thomas Antkowiak

Thomas Antkowiak is Managing Director at MISEREOR

In the Name of Forum Civil Peace Service and MISEREOR, the German Catholic Bishops Organisation for Development Cooperation, I would like to thank all of you for participating in this side-event and for your valuable contributions to our discussion. I would also like to thank our moderator for his introduction to our topic and for guiding us through the discussion. I particularly thank our partner Emanuel Youkhana for sharing some of his experience and for motivating us to

continue to focus on the *prevention* of terrorism and extremism, rather than on just reacting to them after they have violently manifested themselves, and to focus on diplomatic and civilian means. I also warmly thank Datu Mussolini, who unfortunately cannot be with us today, for sending us his statement. In fact, now is the time in the Philippines to avoid that in particular young males in the country are more and more attracted by extremist groups. What they need is a perspective in their lives and reasonable personal prospects, just as the young people in Iraq need a perspective for their future – a future without arms and war; a future, where people can live “in freedom from fear and want”, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights demands and envisions in its Preamble.

‘A world that does not provide the majority of people with the basic needs of a humane life is not viable. Even when there are no wars, such a world is still full of violence. A situation dominated by long-term and severe injustice is inherently violent. It follows that justice creates peace.’ These were the words of the Catholic German Bishops in their publication *A Just Peace* of September 2000. We have heard from Fr. Emanuel and also from Datu Mussolini about the power religions have to build peace, about their importance and indeed successes achieved, but also about the limits of interreligious dialogue in the prevention of terrorism and violent extremism.

Scientific and NGO reports as well as UN documents tell us that military “solutions” are often presented to us as a quick fix, but in a mid-term perspective they have often proved to be no solution at all. We have heard experts and politicians repeatedly point out that military interventions, if they want to be successful, need an exit scenario and need to be part of an overall political strategy. But where is this political strategy, e.g. in the case of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and in so many other cases!?

Of course, people do need security. They need and deserve to be protected against violence from extremist groups and terrorists. But they also need to be protected against state violence countering non-state-violence – which creates even more victims and violence.

In his message on the occasion of the 50th World Day of Peace on 1 January 2017, Pope Francis called for a ‘Style of politics for Peace’. He said that countering violence with violence was not the cure to our broken world, but that at best such counter-violence causes migration and enormous suffering, because vast amounts of resources are diverted to military ends instead of being used to meet the needs of the people.

So let us use all political, diplomatic and non-violent means we can harness to prevent terrorism and violent extremism. Let us act when there is still time to act – and not only react. Let us follow the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Human Rights Covenants and Treaties. Let us implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and let us use the 2030 Agenda as our roadmap. Let us implement Sustainable Development Goal 16 which asks all of us to promote “just, peaceful and inclusive societies”.

If participants of this Munich Security Conference – many of them high-ranking decision makers – come up with ideas, suggestions, political strategies and plans against terrorism and violent extremism that are enlightened by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, then we have come a long way towards a more peaceful world. May the spirit and logic of peace prevail. Thank you very much.

Acknowledgements

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Committed to Peace

Forum Civil Peace Service (forumZFD)

forumZFD supports people involved in violent conflicts on the path to peace. Since 1996, it has been striving to help overcome war and violence.

forumZFD is currently working with peace consultants in Germany and ten other countries in Europe, the Middle East and South-East Asia. Its Academy for Conflict Transformation offers professional training to people in international peace work. Through campaigns, lobby work and public relations, forumZFD actively advocates civil peace policy.

forumZFD is a recognised organisation of the German Civil Peace Service (CPS). Its work is financed through public and private grants, donations and membership fees.

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Bischöfliches Hilfswerk MISEREOR

MISEREOR is the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation. For 60 years MISEREOR has been committed to fighting poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America. MISEREOR's support is available to any human being in need – regardless of their religion, ethnicity or gender.

MISEREOR believes in supporting initiatives driven and owned by the poor and the disadvantaged. In our experience it is they themselves who possess the strength to improve their lives sustainably. On the ground, projects are run by local organisations. Projects supported by MISEREOR strengthen the self-initiative of the poor, and encourage them to articulate their interests and needs – not as supplicants, but as people who know their rights and obligations. Support of this kind at the same time helps the poor avoid becoming dependent on foreign aid.

MISEREOR not only supports projects in the countries of the South; it is also committed to serving the poor by acting as their voice and advocate in Germany.

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Project group Changing the Munich Security Conference

Our vision is a 'Munich Conference for Peace Policy'. This framework should then be seen as a forum for global and fair cooperation leading to initiatives for a just, non-violent and ecologically feasible global policy.

Our path is a path of dialogue and non-violence. We provide impulses and seek dialogue with the organisers, funders and participants of the MSC as well as the interested public.

The project group Changing the Munich Security Conference e.V. is a registered non-profit organisation. Its work is supported by interested individuals, mostly members of other local peace-groups.

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