AGENTS OF PEACE

PEACE . JUSTICE . EQUALITY

Agents of Peace

It's our collective responsibility to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization leading to Terrorism.

Message from the Executive Director

Violent extremism and radicalization of the youth in Kenya should be treated as a ticking time bomb and solutions need to be developed. We all need to have hands on approach to dealing with radicalization. It should not only be left to the government, security agencies and the international community, but local people need to join forces and deal with the issue before it gets out of hand. We need to formulate and execute counter radicalization policies and practices, de-radicalize those at risk by giving them alternatives like vocational training, job opportunities and a sense of patriotism to the country.

Radicalization and violent extremism on religious, ethnicity, tribal and political grounds has over the years done more harm for people all around the world and in particular Kenya, where many youths have been led to join violent extremist groups as a way of seeking identity and a sense of belonging. What are the reasons as to why many youth are joining extremist organization like Al-Shabaab? Is it due to the frustrations faced in their home countries, the promise of huge salaries and benefits as well as being made to believe that they were fighting a worthy cause?

The question here is, how are the youth radicalized and drawn into these violent extremist groups? In these times of insecurity in Kenya a possible scapegoat is easy to point fingers to. Yet, issues are more complicated and complex.

Mohamed Abdirizak Abdullahi

The Team

Mr. Mohamed Dahir Maalim

Mr. Mohamed Dahir Maalim, is expert in criminology and also in the field of Violent extremism, he is the director of Soko Reality Limited in Jamia Mall.

He is passionate about Human Rights and peace.
He is the Chairman of the Board of Agents of Peace.

Bring your friends close but bring your enemies closer.

Mohamed Abdirizak

Mr. Mohamed has worked with Amnesty International as a volunteer and also he is the co-founder of Students Consortium for Human Rights Advocacy (SCOHRA) student-led organization that partners with Amnesty International-Kenya.

He is passionate about human rights and Peace.
He is the Founder and the Executive Director at Agents of Peace.

Grace Maina

Grace is a final year Law Student at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology - Karen Campus.

She is passionate about human rights and currently serves as the Communications Director at Agents of Peace.

Sylvia Mathenge

Sylvia believes in the promotion of peace in Kenya and beyond, where the human race can come together for their best interests.

Sylvia is currently serving as the Head of Programs at Agents of Peace

" If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner. " ~ Nelson Mandela

About Us

Agents of Peace, was created in response to the growth of violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism acts against innocent lives in Kenya. Agents of Peace main work is to Prevent and to Counter Violent Extremism and Radicalization within our community and to promote peaceful coexistence among our society regardless of Religious, Ethnicity and tribal backgrounds.

Vision

To promote peaceful co-existence among our societies regardless of religion, ethnicity, race and colour.

Mission

To provide a platform for peace in which people's differences and misunderstanding can be dealt with non-violently and through dialogue and discussions.

Our Work

Agents of peace, organizes various activities and programs throughout the year.

Our activities include street campaigns addressing and awareness on violent extremism and terrorism, peace walks against terrorism attacks, peace summit with religious leaders to address radicalization and true meaning of jihad in Islam and university programs on preventing/countering violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism.

As Agents of Peace we strive to eradicate the myths, negative perceptions and assumptions within Kenyan Communities on religious, ethnicity and tribal grounds, which leads to some young people becoming alienated and disempowered.

Extremists of all persuasions aim to develop destructive relationships between different communities by promoting division, fear and mistrust of others based on ignorance or prejudice and thereby limiting the life chances of young people.

Education, dialogue and forum of discussions is a powerful weapon against this; equipping young people with the knowledge, skills and critical thinking, to challenge and debate in an informed way.

Any prejudice, discrimination or extremist views, including derogatory language, based on religion, ethnicity or tribal displayed by religious leaders, student or youth within our community will always be challenged and, where appropriate, dealt with according to both Christian and Islamic values.

Radicalization of the youth in Kenya should be treated as a ticking time bomb and solutions need to be developed. We all need to have hands on approach to dealing with radicalization.

It should not only be left to the government, security agencies
and the international community, but local people need to join forces and deal with the issue before it gets out of hand.

We need to formulate and execute counter radicalization
policies and practices, de-radicalize those at risk by giving them alternatives like vocational training, job opportunities and a sense of patriotism to the country. Agents of Peace seeks to address this matter,

The question here is, how are the youth radicalized and drawn into these violent extremist groups? In these times of insecurity in Kenya a possible

scapegoat is easy to point fingers to. Yet, issues are more complicated and complex. How can some youngsters become attracted to radical groups in the society, seemingly so easily? What is the background of such mainly young men? What can be said of the human rights situation in this regard?

Is it a human rights violation by exposing young people into a violent extremism? And, what can we do as students, religious leaders, women leaders, youths, scholars, activist, journalists and (political) leaders of this country?

It had also been largely assumed that radicalization   was happening in religious institutions, only for research to discover that most of the radicalization was happening in learning institutions i.e. secondary schools and universities.

CAMPAIGNING FOR A PEACEFUL ELECTION IN KENYA 2017

Embracing a culture of peace and diversity during, before and after Election

During this period General elections in Kenya, hearts beat in strange patterns, headaches are developed by citizens, and the country sits on tensions due to the elections that are set to be held. Fears of the citizens become visible in their eyes, remembering what happens during post-elections violence.

The masses involved in such violence and disputes are none other than the backbone of the Nation "the youths". Whenever the engine of violence is switched on in any country the youths becomes the fuel of that engines and their operations.

In the last couple of months there have been a number of violent clashes in areas of Kenya where the existing political, social and religious structures are contested or fail to meet the subsistence or security needs of the local populations. Many derived from long-lasting grievances, which periodically reach the pitch of violence, but usually simmer just below the surface.

We were deeply concerned about the rising levels of intolerance and hatred on several fronts specifically on the bases of intra ethnic and inter ethnic tensions that grounds on

political radicalization and ideology. Inter-ethnic conflicts on Political grounds No doubt, various forms of incendiary speech are prominent throughout this campaign period. Both parties traded inflammatory statements against individual politicians and their affiliated parties as well as against particular ethnic groups. Given the diversity of conflict in place and groups, violence in Kenya reflects a combination of these issues.

Ethnic and tribal conflict in Kenya occurs frequently. A significant increase in the severity of such conflicts between the various population groups inhabiting the country was witnessed after the introduction of multi-party politics in the early nineties, and during the 2007– 08 when Kenya faced major conflicts that led to exoduses of ethnic communities with roots in other geographical areas, destruction of properties, rape, killing and maiming.

Within a span of 59 days with distinct but sometimes concurrent patterns of violence: spontaneous, organized and retaliatory, more than 1200 people died, 300,000 displaced and 42,000 houses and business looted and destroyed. Kenya experiences multiple overlapping conflicts that coincide with electoral cycle that acts as politically motivated violence. This causes major alarms for the upcoming 2017 elections as political violence has had on ethnical and tribal grounds.

Radicalization into Violent Extremism Influencing to Terrorism

Tackling religious intolerance and sectarianism in Kenya

Following two decades of dramatic progress in economic development, political stability, improved governance and inspired regional cooperation – currently, Africa is at a turning point. Stability and economic well-being is being threatened by a number of emerging security crises, in particular the recent upsurge of violent conflict, together with its 'religious' justification, rogue character and cross-border spill-overs in many countries.

The threat is compounded by it impacting a number of the pivotal states on the Continent, including Nigeria, Egypt, Kenya and Libya, thus threatening to turn some of the major pillars of continental stability architecture into liabilities. It is imperative that the nature of the threat be accurately diagnosed in a timely manner, and dealt with in a measured way without a counterproductive overreaction.

The spread of violence reflects multiple failures in African state and society, including failure of the state in securing the loyalty of all its citizens, compounded (and often caused) by the failure of political and intellectual elites to provide inclusive political and moral leadership. No less important is the failure of religious leaders, institutions and movements to provide credible spiritual and moral leadership that could channel religious commitment into constructive channels. The sectarian diversion of religious sentiment into violence or the search for short term gains for partisan actors is, fundamentally, a crisis of religion and religious leadership.

Analysis on Kenya

In the recent past, Kenya has witnessed a wave of terrorist attacks that have been perpetrated by people believed to have links with the extremist group al-Shabaab. Some of these groups have indiscriminately attacked churches and eating joints, killing many innocent people.

To forestall such attacks, security apparatuses often respond to such attacks by hunting down and raiding hubs believed to be training ground for mostly Islamic extremism especially in coast region and Nairobi. The Masjid Musa Mosque raid is a classic example of police reaction and action. A string of grenade attacks have occurred in various parts of Kenya although most are confined to Garissa, Mombasa and the capital Nairobi. These attacks have intensified since the military incursion into Somalia in October 2011.

Granted, youth radicalization and religious intolerance goes back to the 1998 US embassy attacks in Nairobi and the Tanzanian city of Dar es Salam that killed 220 people. In 2002, a dual car bomb and suicide attack on a hotel and plane in Mombasa led to the arrest of one suspect.

Following such attacks and subsequent police reaction, there always follow a spate of riots. For example, the killing of two controversial Muslim clergy believed to be behind the jihadist ideology led to serious riots in Mombasa. Such riots have resulted in the burning of churches and the killing of people thought or suspected to be Christians.

The coverage of the Eastleigh Usalama watch operations is illustrative of what sensationalised and sometimes emotive coverage of such issues can do. The scare-mongering as well as profiling of Somali ethnic groups as potential terrorists resulted in some of them being bundled out of public transport and social places.

Kenyans of Somali heritage and Muslim communities reported difficulties obtaining government-mandated identification documents.

Religious tensions were high in some areas of the country. For instance, in the Likoni suburb of

Mombasa, armed men opened fire on Sunday worshippers at a church, killing six and wounding more than a dozen. Some Muslim groups threatened individuals, especially those of ethnic Somali origin, who converted to Christianity. A monument erected by the Sikh community in Kisumu was vandalized in February by an angry mob after local pastors deemed it satanic.

Interreligious nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya, stated that with few exceptions Kenyans respect religious diversity and are able to exercise freedom of conscience and religion.

Ethno-religious composition of Kenyan society and the war on terror: Convoluted Intricacies

Kenya is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural society. Christian, Muslim and Hindu communities are some of the largest religious groups in Kenya. The Muslim community comprises approximately eleven per cent of the Kenyan population.

The composition of Muslim community in Kenya majorly consists of the young, up to 65 per cent of this group being between 18 and 35. About 30 per cent of Kenya's Muslims are of Somali origin but born in Kenya (Kenyan-Somalis). Another 10 per cent are of Borana origin residing in the regions bordering Ethiopia. The remainder constitutes Muslim minorities living in Christian-dominated regions.

According to a report by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the Muslim community, especially Kenyan nationals of Somali origin, are confronted with increasing accusations of being responsible for the growing security risks in the country. Granted, Kenya's Muslims are moderate, with the community involved in every facet of Kenya's activity, social, economic and political. However, there is increasing perception that the Muslim community is marginalized, this going back to back to negotiations for Kenya's independence in which ethnic Somalis, who are mainly Muslims, were unrepresented. The fact that they are visibly part of the Muslim community, even if not in any way part of al-Shabaab, contributes to them sometimes being treated differently.

Most notably, members of the Somali-Kenyan and Somali communities claim to be victims of racial or ethnic profiling and to have been rounded up and arrested for no other reason than their background and ethnicity.

The ISS report further states that Muslim youth in Kenya are victims of the justice system that considers every Muslim 'guilty of terrorism until proven otherwise'. Joining extremist groups for such youths is, therefore, an accepted or even expected option. They are already viewed as terrorists, whether they are or not and thus find it easy to join extremist groups and terrorism

2018 Eastleigh Peace Walk

Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution stipulates there shall be no state religion and prohibits religious discrimination. It provides for freedom of religion and belief individually or in community, including the freedom to manifest any religion through worship, practice, teaching, or observance, and states individuals shall not be compelled to act or engage in any act contrary to their belief or religion.

The constitution and other laws and policies prohibit religious discrimination and protect religious freedom, including the freedom to manifest any religion or belief through worship, practice, teaching, or observance and debate on religious questions. Some Muslims, especially ethnic Somalis, stated their communities were the target of government-directed extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest and detention, and deportation, charges the government denied. Security officials briefly closed then reopened four mosques in Mombasa and threatened to close other mosques or madrassahs around the country, stating the mosques were linked to incitement of violent extremism. Muslim leaders and human rights organizations stated "Operation Usalama Watch" unfairly targeted Somali and some other Muslim communities.

Government Practices

Human rights groups and prominent Muslim leaders stated the government targeted Muslims for extrajudicial killing, torture and forced interrogation, arbitrary arrest, detention without trial, deportation, and denial of freedom of assembly and worship. Security officials briefly closed and then reopened four mosques in Mombasa and threatened to close other mosques or madrassahs around to the country, stating the mosques were linked to incitement of

violent extremism. Prominent human rights groups, including Muslims for Human Rights (Muhuri) and Haki Africa, stated in the press the government was conducting a deliberate campaign of assassination against Muslim clerics. The press reported Haki Africa said it had documented 21 cases of prominent Muslim businesspeople, clerics, or community leaders who were killed on the coast between 2012 and 2014, and whose cases remained unresolved. Government officials denied any connection to the deaths.

Religion, Nationalism & the state

Little's conceptual framework on the character of the regime and the enabling conditions for religious intolerance in illiberal regimes is well borne out in the case studies, in which the changing role of the conceptualization of the nation has been influenced in conflict by religious belief. It is the nationalistic setting of these conflicts that religion plays a direct role in defining the extent to which national identities are more exclusive or inclusive and to the connections among religion, state authority, and specific policies.

The complex interplay between the articulation of the identity of the "nation" and "state" determines the ways in which the legitimacy of the nation and the terms of citizenship in the state are defined. What emerges most strikingly is that conflict settings move over time across the spectrum of nationalism and extremism, and changes in domestic institutions of the state shape the ways in which religious and political elites find common cause in ways that contribute to conflict dynamics through a higher justification of the nature of difference within society.

Pictorial

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

Rationale

In these times of insecurity in Kenya a possible scapegoat is easy to point fingers to. Yet, issues are more complicated and complex. How can some youngsters become attracted to radical groups in the society, seemingly so easily? What is the background of such mainly young men? What can be said of the human rights situation in this regard? And, what can we do as students, religious leaders, women leaders, youths, scholars, activist, journalists and (political) leaders of this country?

"Curbing the negative perception against Refugees and Migrants in Kenya"

In the context of the past security operation dubbed Operation Usalama Watch human rights issue seem to be at high stake. The human rights of life and freedom from fear, of Kenyan citizens in a context of blasts on attacks on Matatus, Shopping malls and Religious buildings seems to be compromised.

The Kenyan authorities see themselves compelled to protect these citizens' rights. Yet, in order to do so, it seems that basic rights of some individual and communities at large are at risk. Especially the Somali refugee community, according to human rights and legal aid organisations, are facing basic violations of their human rights such as the right of a fair trial. Other political, socio-economic rights seem to be compromised as well.

"De-linking extremism and Radicalization from religious perspective"

Following two decades of dramatic progress in economic development, political stability, improved governance and inspired regional cooperation – currently, Africa is at a turning point.

Stability and economic well-being are being threatened by a number of emerging security crises, in particular the recent upsurge of violent conflict, together with its 'religious' justification, rogue character and cross-border spill-overs in many countries.

The threat is compounded by it impacting a number of the pivotal states on the Continent, including Nigeria, Egypt, Kenya and Libya, thus threatening to turn some of the major pillars of continental stability architecture into liabilities.

It is imperative that the nature of the threat be accurately diagnosed in a timely manner, and dealt with in a measured way without a counterproductive overreaction. The spread of violence reflects multiple failures in African state and society, including failure of the state in securing the loyalty of all its citizens, compounded (and often caused) by the failure of political and intellectual elites to provide inclusive political and moral leadership. No less important is the failure of religious leaders, institutions and movements to provide credible spiritual and moral leadership that could channel religious commitment into constructive channels.

The sectarian diversion of religious sentiment into violence or the search for short term gains for partisan actors is, fundamentally, a crisis of religion and religious leadership.

Religion figures prominently in the narratives framing the more destructive conflicts currently plaguing the continent, in particular in Somalia, Nigeria, Mali, Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Sudan. However, many analysts have argued that the underlying failure is the state's lack of inclusiveness and its failure to fulfil its basic functions of providing a decent life for its citizens.

The salience and politicisation of religious identity was seen by some as an outcome of the 'failure of modernity', which resulted in uprooting large groups without delivering any compensating benefits (Ellingsen, 2005: 307).

Conflicts that look like 'religious' rebellions against the domineering 'secular' state, or reactions against the imposition of religious hegemony, are in fact linked to the failure of the state to address concerns regarding inequality and lack of fair representation of disadvantaged groups in national institutions (Haynes, 2007: 308-9).

Religious hatred

In practice, manifestations of collective religious hatred frequently overlap with national, racial, ethnic or other forms of hatred, and in many situations it may seem impossible to clearly separate these phenomena. As a result, the label "religion" can sometimes be imprecise and problematic when used to describe complex phenomena and motives of collective hatred.

Nevertheless it remains obvious that religions and beliefs can serve as powerful demarcators of "us-versus-them" groupings. Unfortunately, there are many examples testifying to this destructive potential of religion.

At the same time, one should always bear in mind that anti-hatred movements exist within all religions and that most adherents of the different religious and belief traditions are committed to practising their faith as a source of peace, charity and compassion, rather than of hostility and hatred.

Repeated attack on churches and the unsolved killings of both

Muslim and Christian clerics in our country have contributed religious tension/hatred in various parts of the country.

At least 48 people were killed recently when dozens of militants attacked a Kenyan coastal town overnight; targeting a police station and two hotels as said by officials and the responsibility was claimed by Al-shabaab which declared Kenya as a war zone, constituting Kenyans on sectarian division and to have another Central African Republic in our beloved Kenya and against Kenyans

Religion, Conflict and the African State

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Similarly the weak-state syndrome (weak capacity, weak legitimacy, defective governance, lack of cohesive national identities, and external and internal vulnerability), has been blamed for disruptive violence. The syndrome produces its own 'political logic, where 'internal conflicts are the deliberate creation and maintenance of 'war economies".

Elites in such states adopt various strategies (including exclusivist politics, patrimonialism, ethnic mobilisation, corruption, etc.) to navigate the treacherous waters of state fragility. These strategies frequently –and predictably-generate conflict (Jackson, 2002: 35-44).

Patrimonialism, or the tendency to use the state as a private resource by ruling elites, and using these resources to secure support among privileged constituencies, was also seen as an explanatory variable to explain the weakness of the African state and the rogue nature of recent wars that reflect this feature (Kawabata, 2006; Reno, 2011).

According to these analyses, the secular-religious divide is not the core factor in ongoing conflicts, but the incapacity of the state to fulfil its core functions effectively. Religious conflicts have been rare in Africa, at least until recently, as many studies have indicated.

Often apparent religious conflicts could be symptoms and consequences of 'struggle among competing sects of elites for political power and ethnic favouritism' (Bamidele, 2014: 39). Even where studies appeared to pinpoint religious factors in conflict, this is linked to a 'politicisation of religion', rather to religion as such (Basedau et. al., 2011: 752-54; Bamidele, 2014: 39).

The difficulty of decoupling ethnic and religious identities (not to mention class identities) in the fault-lines dividing the belligerents is also reiterated by many (Haynes, 2007).

Intervention that we use to Prevent and countering all forms of Violent Extremism and Radicalisation leading to Terrorism Act

1. The use of soft-power: an open discussion and deliberation on what motivates and inspires the youth to join extremist groups.
2. Discussions between religious leaders and the youths on tackling and preventing violent extremism.
3. One on one debate on the negative impact of violent extremism based on ethnicity, religion and tribe.
4. One on one consultation between a youth and a child.
5. Encouraging the girl child and the boy child to contribute peace and diversity.
6. Building a bond of trust within the young generation.
7. Setting up peace and Pve clubs in primary, secondary and Universities.
8. Organizing annual peace and pve summit.
9. Organizing peace walk to address the need to live in peace.
10. Organizing peace summit on peaceful elections.
11. Empowering and encouraging youths to embrace and accept diversity, unity and peaceful coexistence.
12. Debate competitions within high schools and universities in Kenya
13. Debate competition in primary and madrassa schools.
14. Debate competition within the youth leaders
15. Platforms for dialogue for our peace programs
16. Street campaigns with students from primary, high school and university students.
17. Primary and high school teachers meeting and to discuss more about tackling violent extremism
18. Teachers and parents' meetings on peace initiatives.

References

The Report of the Waki Commission, available at http://www.eastandard.net/downloads/Waki_Report.pdf. It was delivered to the President Mwai Kibaki on 15 October 2008.

See the report of the KNCHR,15th August 2008 ("KNCHR Report"), available at http://www.knchr.org/dmdocuments/KNCHR%20doc.pdf
The report indicates some of the rights which were violated. It states: "the post-election violence heralded violation of fundamental human rights such as the right to life, the right not to be forcibly evicted or displaced from one's home, the right to hold opinions without interference, the right to participate in public affairs and to vote in periodic elections, the right to property, the right to education, the prohibition not to engage in incitement to discrimination, and the right to freedom of movement", at paragraph 22, p 5.

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