



ICRD Monthly Update

November 25, 2015

Tuesday, Dec 1: Give to Gain



As Giving Tuesday approaches, please keep our Center's work in mind—a short summary of which is provided below. As you will note, much of it bears on our country's ability to limit the reach and impact of the kind of terrorism that has recently taken such a toll in France, Lebanon, and Egypt.



1. Saudi Arabia

Over the past year, we have made substantial progress in facilitating educational reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Among other initiatives, this has involved meaningful exchanges between Saudi and American educators in (1) addressing problems of bias and intolerance relating to textbook content and teacher training materials and (2) determining what other adjustments might be needed in their respective educational systems to maximize the opportunities for youth to succeed in today's globalized market place. Because the Saudis are in the process of implementing their recently announced National Plan for Educational Reform (to the tune of \$22B over a four years), the opportunity for introducing new ideas is particularly timely.

2. Syria

Earlier in the year, ICRD laid the groundwork for implementing a social contract between the Kurds and the Syriac Christians that it had facilitated over the previous year through a series of faith-based reconciliation seminars. The contract, which was being implemented with the support of the US State Department, would enable both sides to live in peace once the fighting subsides. Unfortunately, this effort has been put on hold because ISIS has taken over the area in which we were working.

3. Pakistan

This month ICRD completed a pilot project that involved assessing the effectiveness of governmental and civil society strategies in countering the intrusion of Jihadi Salafism in Pakistan. A second and related task was to determine how best to involve conservative Muslims in the development and implementation of such efforts. Mainstream Muslims have no traction with the extremists; but conservatives do. The next step will involve moving beyond the pilot to conduct similar research in Yemen, Tunisia and Morocco.

We have also just launched two additional projects in Pakistan, one to prevent and mitigate sectarian violence across the country and another to empower women in countering violent extremism.

4. Yemen

Over the last year, we initiated two new projects in Yemen, the first of which is to build the capacity of indigenous religious, tribal, and other community leaders to counter violent extremism by preventing and resolving locally-based tribal conflicts. The second project is a field study designed to produce recommendations for a new national transition process that will include marginalized communities in the south of the country, which have been excluded in the past.

5. Colombia

In Colombia, ICRD has been addressing the challenges of effectively reintegrating former combatants into civil society. What typically happens to those who have disarmed as a result of a peace process is that they end up joining criminal gangs or the narco networks because they are no longer welcome in their local communities; nor do they have the requisite skills to pursue honest employment. ICRD has been working with the country's formidable women's networks and with selected religious and indigenous spiritual leaders to solve the reentry problem and with the government and business interests on the employment question. In this regard, ICRD has conducted multiple workshops over the past year for female peacemakers, religious and spiritual leaders, former combatants, human rights practitioners, and political and business leaders. The government of Colombia is highly enthused about this effort.

6. Interfaith Leadership Network (ILN)

ICRD's Interfaith Leadership Network, which consists of Pakistani and American religious and interfaith leaders who have banded together to build relationships, address intolerance and ease the plight of religious minorities, has initiated a number of peacebuilding initiatives over the past year. These have included: (1) workshops for Evangelical pastors and Muslim imams from cities across the United States to promote interfaith collaboration in their communities; (2) a conference in Doha, Qatar that brought together American and Pakistani pastors and imams to explore how they could collaborate more effectively across borders; (3) a major conference in Philadelphia for Evangelical pastors on the role they can play in arresting the spread and impact of Islamophobia in the United States; and (4) sermons, media outreach, and other initiatives designed to counter religious discrimination in Pakistan.

We need additional funding in each of these areas, so any assistance you can provide will have a helpful impact.

Many thanks for your consideration, and have a blessed Thanksgiving

With best wishes,



Douglas Johnston
President, ICRD



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