



ICRD Monthly Update

July 3, 2018

Dear friends,

After generations of strife, there are promising signs of change in Pakistan. Last year, the country saw a decrease in the number of terrorism-related deaths, and experienced no major attacks during the Shi'a holy day of Ashura. In January, the government announced the release of a fatwa signed by 1,800 scholars that condemns sectarianism and other forms of extremist hatred and violence. Over the last 15 years, ICRD has been blessed to work with Pakistani religious peacebuilders across many faith traditions who have taken a leading role in challenging prejudice and extremism.

Most recently, ICRD and its partners supported a powerful transformation in the decades-long hostilities between Islamic sects by supporting a messaging campaign led by local religious actors. This campaign seeks to combat divisive sectarian rhetoric with a theologically-grounded counter-narrative that was designed by religious leaders from all major sects and facilitated by ICRD.

To date, ICRD's team of religious advocates have:

- Directly engaged more than **6,000 scholars, imams, students, and religious faithful** through conferences, training workshops, Friday sermons, and visits to schools and mosques of all sects;
- Disseminated **tens of thousands of hard copies** of the counter-narrative across major cities in Punjab, Sindh and KPK; and
- Reached an estimated general audience in the millions through the publication of **nearly forty articles** in local and national media outlets, and several appearances on major television programs.

Beyond the broad reach of these efforts, advocates have made incredible progress in building support for this narrative. The document has been endorsed by key political and governmental figures, including religio-political parties, law enforcement, and others who have agreed to disseminate it throughout their networks. At the same time, advocates have witnessed remarkable transformations within the religious community. At one event, a prominent Salafi figure who had once publicly labeled Shi'a as non-Muslim endorsed the narrative and invited Shi'a to future discussions of sectarian harmony.



These efforts represent the culmination of many years of collaboration with dedicated and courageous Pakistani partners. Since our earliest engagement in Pakistan, ICRD and its partners have:



- Trained **8,500 madrasa teachers and administrators, imams and inter-faith leaders** to enhance curriculum and pedagogy and build capacity in teaching critical thinking, tolerance, human rights, and other peacebuilding subjects.

- Facilitated the development of a peacebuilding textbook, based on Qur’anic principles, in collaboration with key scholars and madrasa leaders.

- Mobilized and empowered women civil society leaders and leaders of girls’ madrasas to address local drivers of extremism and strengthen the resilience of their community, which have impacted nearly **3,000 beneficiaries** in four cities.

While there are still many who are suffering as a result of sectarian prejudice in Pakistan, major strides continue to be made toward peace. In reflecting on our fifteen-year history in the space, ICRD is proud to be a part of that process.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Patton'.

James Patton

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