



ICRD Monthly Update

January 29, 2019

Dear friends,

In a remote Yemeni desert town, occasionally occupied by al-Qaeda, a community leader named Ahmed stood over a shallow pit. Dust was being kicked up by the young men in and around it as they struggled with large black tubes. But, despite a brutal ongoing civil war and ever-present militant groups, these were not weapons, they were piping for water. The town had been slated to receive water infrastructure, but in the midst of ongoing violence, this aid never came. The absence of the Yemeni government gives al Qaeda and other militant groups a perfect opportunity to gain local support by providing basic social services to communities. Some of the youth that Ahmed had enlisted in building the new pipeline had previously been drawn to the militants, seeking a sense of purpose. Now they sweated and struggled with the coil of pipe, intent on succeeding at bringing water to their parched town.

Two months prior, Ahmed had identified water as a principle cause of conflict in his town. ICRD was holding a training for faith and community leaders on conflict analysis and preventing violent extremism. “If we can provide water and at the same time involve the local youth,” he had said, “we could solve a number of issues at once.” And so the water project was born. These are ICRD’s local partners. ***These are the heroes of the work***, who advance dialogue and reconciliation, often at great risk to themselves.

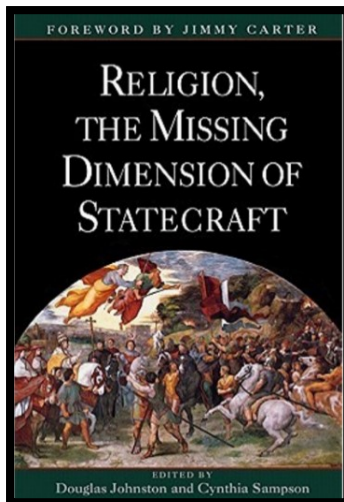


Across Yemen the war rages and recruitment of youth to violent extremist groups is high. These groups offer young people a chance to help provide services for their town, as well as a way to feel that they belong to a greater effort. ***ICRD’s program gives them an alternative.*** “I used to think we needed al Qaeda to help us,” said one participant, “now I feel like we can help each other, we don’t need them.” ICRD is working to prevent extremism where the Yemeni government is absent.

Now, with our own government having gone through a shut down, programs like this one are at risk. Not only multiple programs in Yemen, but ICRD’s work in Saudi Arabia to remove intolerance from text books – the very books that are being used by ISIS – and work in Pakistan engaging multiple religious sects to create a counter-message to sectarian violence. The inability of ICRD to fully fund its work by drawing down government grants also means that programs are being affected in Spain, Kenya, Indonesia, Lebanon and other places struggling against violence and extremism. Most importantly, the dedicated ICRD staff that has expertise in conflict reduction, extremism, local language and culture, and religious engagement need their salaries covered in order to keep working, which is an uncertain proposition with the government shutdown.

The good news is that ICRD's programmatic funds have nearly tripled in the last three years. However, there is a critical need for ICRD supporters to help us grow our general operating funds. In addition to the impact of the government shutdown, it's often the case that only a small portion of the funds that are awarded for programs can be dedicated to basic operational necessities, like rent, office supplies, non-program related salary lines, utilities, and the like. Across the world, we are supporting men and women like Ahmed as they pursue peace and work against radicalization and extremism. The impact of our work is significant and measurable and will make the world a safer place and keep our armed forces from having to go in harm's way. ***Now we need your help!***

ICRD was founded by Dr. Douglas Johnston in 1999, on the premise that US foreign policy must demonstrate a greater awareness and understanding of the religious dimensions of international conflicts and efforts to resolve them. So much of our work is predicated on the notion that religion is often overlooked as a resource in building bridges across complicated divisions between people who have fought with one another, sometimes for centuries, in areas of ***strategic interest for American foreign policy.***



Dr. Johnston's vision has proven time and again to be prescient and profoundly relevant. U.S. foreign policy requires, perhaps now more than ever, a rich awareness of the religious landscape in conflict areas – a point proven by ICRD's continued programmatic success and the persistent interest of U.S. policy makers in our work.

This year, in honor of our 20th year of operation and the 25th anniversary of Dr. Johnston's seminal book, *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, ICRD is launching a giving campaign seeking to raise an additional \$150,000.00 in general operating support to ensure ICRD's financial health and continued growth in a world where our work is desperately needed. Part of this campaign is the critical immediate need to counteract the negative impact of the government shutdown. If ICRD's mission and the vision of Dr. Johnston resonate with you, ***I implore you to contribute to this campaign today.***

In these incredibly divisive times, we need to come together through our commonly held religious values and support dialogue and reconciliation for peace. With the support of local heroes, ICRD is doing important and difficult work, ***but we need your help.*** Use the "donate" button below or visit our website at www.icrd.org/donate to join this effort; and please consider becoming a monthly recurring donor. Every little bit helps and, together, we can continue to make faith a part of the solution to violent conflict.

Warm regards,



James Patton

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Dr. Douglas M. Johnston's seminal work *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, an undoubtedly foundational text to both our organization and US foreign policy. The Center for Strategic and International Studies will be celebrating Dr. Johnston's book and legacy on February 5th (more information can be found [here](#)). Please consider joining us at the CSIS headquarters to hear Dr. Johnston speak about his book, its impact, and the lasting influence that this text has had on the field of practice.

A 25th Anniversary Review of Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft

Tuesday, February 5, 2019 3:00pm – 4:00pm
1616 Rhode Island Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036

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