



ICRD Monthly Update

April 4, 2019

Dear friends,

Yemen remains one of the world's most complicated conflict environments. The ongoing civil war, famine, cholera epidemic, and the looming presence of extremist groups have made life immensely difficult for millions of Yemeni people. Men, women, and children have been left sick and scattered as a direct result of the ongoing violence. Meanwhile, world leaders and international bodies have been wrestling with the hard truths of the conflict, attempting to negotiate *the best possible solutions for the Yemeni people*.

But what do the Yemenis have to say about their own needs? ICRD has been working hard to take local needs and local attitudes seriously in Yemen, in service of our ongoing work to combat the spread of violent extremism and strengthen local religious and community leaders. On a recent trip to Jordan, ICRD met with key implementing partners from the capital of Sana'a to discuss the findings of our most recent needs assessment and to begin developing the curriculum that we will employ to train Yemeni religious leaders, educators, and leaders of civil society organizations in peacebuilding and addressing violent extremism. ***ICRD and its partners conducted community assessments*** through targeted interviews and use of the most innovative technologies to distill a list of Yemen's most pressing needs, as told by the Yemeni people themselves.



In these targeted interviews, Yemeni people from some of the most conflict-impacted regions in the country discussed their perspectives on local peacebuilding and local concerns that are contributing to the spread of violent extremism. By identifying local needs, from *the perspective of the Yemeni people themselves*, ICRD is supporting local ownership of these peacebuilding initiatives and taking seriously the concerns of those most affected by the persistence of conflict.

“The first time CVE training was done in Yemen was because of you (ICRD). Your work made us pioneers.” – Yemeni Workshop Participant

Targeted interviews indicated that the primary drivers of violent extremism in Yemen are tied to the lack of basic needs and localized, communal conflicts. Many also cited a disconnect among community youth. In the midst of the ongoing civil war, many young people are missing a sense of belonging and feel alienated by their communities. In response, ICRD is working with local leaders to design community projects that will build social cohesion and empower young people to become leaders in their community. Led largely by local religious and community leaders,

these projects will empower local populations to solve local problems and unite against the spread of violent conflict.

ICRD has also continued its *partnership with a leading artificial intelligence (AI) company, IntMind*. Having previously partnered on work in Pakistan, ICRD and *IntMind* are continuing to push the bounds of what can be accomplished with emerging AI technologies in the areas of conflict assessment, program design, monitoring, and evaluation. For ICRD's work in Yemen, IntMind performed a series of community assessments to decipher drivers of violent extremism in targeted areas throughout the country. Key findings from the AI's community assessment reinforced many of the findings from ICRD's own assessment, but also added powerful insights about the psycho-social elements of violent extremism – such as the relationship between key psychological motivators like identity, fulfillment, purpose, freedom, and adventure.

Our programs include the most *rigorous and effective mechanisms for analyzing local conflicts*. Without such analysis, our programs would not be as successful. Local voices are a critically necessary component of all of our programming plans, ensuring the buy-in and relevance that means that the work will long outlive ICRD's programs. As local voices echo throughout our work with religious leaders and institutions, the space is increasingly opened for religious peacebuilders to thrive.

This has been our commitment for the past 20 years. As the organization takes time to reflect and celebrate its 20th anniversary, I am pleased to announce the upcoming 20th Anniversary Faith-in-Action Award Dinner! Hosted at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, Virginia, please join me in celebrating ICRD's twenty-year history on Thursday, May 16 at 6:30PM. Details about the event can be found by clicking the invite. I look forward to celebrating with you all!



Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "James Patton".

James Patton

This year, ICRD is celebrating its 20th anniversary! Having worked in fifteen different countries to date, ICRD is committing itself to bringing our international expertise back to the United States. There is a serious need in this country for voices that challenge religious prejudice, elevate interfaith harmony, and promote peacebuilding. Religious hate crimes are on the rise and ICRD is looking to the future with an eye toward our own backyard. Join us at 6:30pm on Thursday, May 16 at the Army-Navy Country Club in Arlington, VA for the 20th Anniversary Faith-in-Action Award Dinner and to learn more about where ICRD is heading! If you cannot attend, please consider donating in support of the event and the work of ICRD.

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