



ICRD Monthly Update

March 10, 2020

Dear friends,

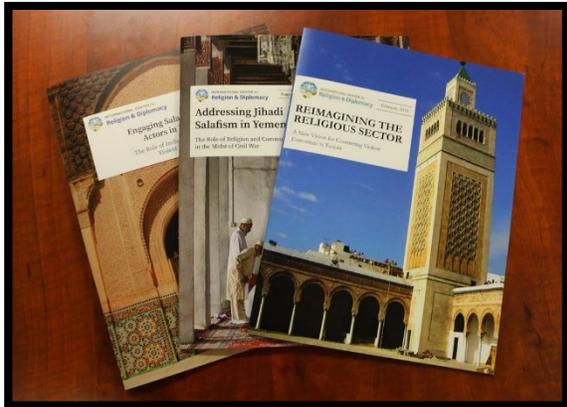
The diverse island nation of the Philippines has seen schisms and tensions deepen across its array of identity groups in recent decades – in many ways supported by an increase in extremist activity in the areas around Mindanao. This southern region has become an operational hub for a number of violent extremist organizations, including several ISIS-affiliated groups like the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. These groups have a strong base of operations in the under-governed area of Mindanao, and continue to exploit ongoing communal tensions for their radicalization and recruitment purposes.

Addressing these kinds of realities, ICRD is participating in a new, multi-country program that works to empower local, community-based NGOs with effective practices in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). Last month, this engagement reached the Philippines. Under a cloud of volcanic ash, an ICRD team arrived in Manila and met with the leaders of community-based NGOs to discuss the challenges that they face and their most pressing concerns regarding P/CVE, including their own security and how addressing basic needs can have an impact on reducing the psychological and social drivers of violent extremism.



The methodology for this training, which is grounded in elevating the knowledge and skills of the local organizations, was derived from earlier work done by ICRD in Yemen, Pakistan and Morocco, and was honed in the first of these recent workshops in Mombasa, Kenya. Like the Philippines, Kenya has been struggling to contain the influence and activities of extremists, namely al Shabaab which has an especially strong presence on the Somali border. In these training workshops, ICRD shared tools and methodologies for participant-led conflict and context analysis, identifying local drivers of radicalization, best practices in intervention design, and evaluating impact with a broad spectrum of community actors. By empowering these groups to identify and resolve the communal tensions that are contributing to violent extremism, ICRD hopes to create networks of practice for sustainable change.

Immediately following the Philippine engagement, ICRD conducted another training in Tunisia that explored these same themes and topics – although adapted to the unique contextual challenges facing the Tunisian public sphere. This complemented ICRD’s 2018 research study, “Reimagining the Religious Sector: A New Vision for Countering Violent Extremism in Tunisia.” The study



(available on the ICRD website) was based on the hypothesis that, if properly trained and empowered, religious actors and institutions could greatly enhance the resilience of local communities in the face of extremist narratives of intolerance and violence. Now, in training community-based NGOs (faith-based and otherwise), ICRD is putting the recommendations of its 2018 research into action.

Going beyond a traditional think-tank model, this example of research-to-action is at the heart of

ICRD's institutional strategy, in which meaningful programmatic engagement requires careful study and rigorous understanding of the local conflict context. We invite you to join ICRD as we seek to turn the understanding that our research provides into a transformative engagement with communities. Together, we can make faith part of the solution.

Warm regards,

James Patton

Do you enjoy working in a mission-driven environment? Do you believe that religion is an underutilized resource in peacebuilding and conflict resolution? We have the perfect opportunity for you because **ICRD is hiring!** The Center is looking to immediately hire two Program Assistants for our Yemen and Saudi programs, with a strong preference for candidates with experience in peacebuilding, proposal development skills, and Arabic language fluency. Check out the posting on our website at www.icrd.org to learn more about the positions!

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