

Session 1 – Concept of peace and peacemaking in Islam

SHARING EXPERIENCES OF PEACEMAKING IN ISLAM

Discussion questions

PART A

1. What are the main concepts of peace and peacemaking in Islam that you know about or have come across?

PART B

2. How useful are these concepts for you?
3. How do you think they apply to conflict situations and conflict resolution today?

Session 2: Applying Islamic concepts of peace and peacemaking to counter extremism and resolve conflicts

EXTREMISM AND PEACEBUILDING EXERCISE 1

You have been asked to intervene in a situation at a small local mosque in a nearby town. The Imam of the mosque said to you that a few months ago, two young men started coming to the mosque and they prayed in a different way to everyone else. They talked to younger men and boys and got some more supporters and now they come every week. They call themselves '*al-muwahideen*'. They pray separately and away from everyone else at the back of the mosque but in a very visible way. They get younger boys to ask questions of the Imam. The questions are aimed at making the Imam look uneducated in Islam and the young boys laugh at the Imam. The questions include ones that claim Islam forbids worshipping at shrines, since this goes against the idea of *tawhid*. In the last week, the group have been criticising other people coming to the mosque for not praying 'properly'; they have criticised women for not wearing hijab and they have also criticised a shopkeeper for selling alcohol.

Discussion questions

PART A

1. Do you think the youth are expressing legitimate religious belief or radicalism or extremism?
2. What do you think the mosque leadership should do?
3. Which concepts and arguments from Islam could be useful in starting a peaceful dialogue between the mosque and the youths?
4. How will you start the process of dialogue between the mosque and the youth?
5. Suppose the youth say your religious arguments are wrong. What will you do? What help and religious resources do you need?
6. Who (inside or outside your country) do you think will be able to communicate effectively with these youth with the aim of moving them away from extremist ideas?

PART B

7. Do you have any other ideas about how the religious institutions in your country can **build resilience** within the religion to prevent extremism?

Session 2: Applying Islamic concepts of peace and peacemaking to counter extremism and resolve conflicts

DIALOGUE AND PEACEBUILDING EXERCISE

As part of your work, you have to initiate and facilitate dialogue between Orthodox Christian and Muslim religious leaders in a town that you do not know well. In the town there has been a lot of discussion recently because of the activities of the banned Jehovah's Witnesses and because of perceived proselytization by American Christian evangelical organisations who, it is claimed, are converting Muslims to Christianity.

Discussion Questions

PART A

1. What is your role? What are the limits of your role?
2. How will you begin this work? What will be your first steps?
3. Who will you contact first? How will you find out who to contact?
4. What is the purpose of the dialogue?
5. Which religious concepts can you apply to initiate peaceful dialogue?

PART B

Two religious leaders attend the first meeting, one Christian and one Muslim. They agree that meeting each other is fine and it is a courteous meeting. Both of them start talking about the differences between each other's religions and, implicitly, say that their religion is better than the other's. They start debating questions of theology.

6. What are the likely **positions** in this situation (write them down)?
7. What are the likely **interests** in this situation (write them down)?
8. How could you reframe issues that they want to debate into a **dialogue**?
9. How could you reframe their positions into common interests that can be discussed together towards a shared goal?
10. How can you widen the dialogue to include other people and other religious groups and sects?
11. How can you ensure that the dialogue continues beyond any meetings that you organize?

PART C

Two years later, as a result of the process you initiated, quite a few people have become interested in your work, some of them young people and most of them women. Only a very few of them are 'officially' involved in the institutions you first contacted. They are interested in peace between communities, especially people living outside the major towns.

12. How will you involve them?
13. What training do they need to enable them to become 'peacebuilders' in their communities?
14. What training do you need to help them?
15. How can you know they are being effective in their work? How can you measure your effectiveness?

Session 2: Applying Islamic concepts of peace and peacemaking to counter extremism and resolve conflicts

COUNTERING EXTREMISM EXERCISE

As part of a strategy to counter extremism, you have been contacted by the security services and the prosecutor's office to talk to some imprisoned people near your city. The prisoners include members of a non-violent salafi sect, members of Hizb-ut Tahrir, and members of the Turkestan Islamic Party.

1. Which groups will you talk to? What are the reasons you chose these groups?
2. Which groups won't you talk to? What are your reasons?
3. What do you think the radical Muslim groups want? Write this down and try and be as precise as possible.
4. What help and resources do you need to help you identify the relevant groups, their aims, beliefs or ideologies?
5. What religious resources (texts, training, people) do you need to engage in countering extremism?
6. Where will you get these resources from?

*Session 3: Case studies of religious leaders preventing extremism and resolving conflicts around the world and in Central Asia***EXTREMISM AND PEACEBUILDING EXERCISE 2**

You have been told that this year up to 60 young men and some women have left your country to fight in Syria, some as entire families. They will fight in Syria as part of several different groups, including Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar, Jabhat al-Nusra, the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham, the Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya and other small groups, including batallions that are named after central Asian countries or heroes, such as Zahir Baibar. There have been several videos and messages posted in 2013 on the Internet calling again for 'mujahideen' from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and other countries to fight jihad in Syria. There are also videos that call for future fighting in the 'Mawarounnahr region' (their name for the area covered by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan). Some of the men in the videos are from central Asian countries, including Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and are calling themselves 'Jund al-Khilafa'.

Discussion questions*PART A*

1. Why do you think some young men and women from your country are going to fight in a far-away country like Syria?
2. What reasons, aside than ideology, might be affecting their motivations and decisions?
3. How can religious figures and groups **prevent** small groups of young people from engaging in fighting in Syria?
4. Are there any religious concepts that you think will be helpful in **preventing** the youths from engaging in fighting in Syria?
5. The fighters in Syria will come back to their home countries. Some religious leaders say we should enlighten these returning fighters so that they can be educated and abandon extremist ideas; other religious leaders say we should not be involved in communicating with these youth and should not think about engaging in any dialogue with them. What do you think can be done when these young people return home after fighting? Think carefully about the risks associated with each of your suggestions and think carefully about the risks associated with **not** carrying out each of your suggestions.

PART B

6. Some people have argued that a **strategy** against preventing violent extremism should also mean that:
- The secular state guarantees freedom of religion and belief, as part of universal human rights, while it also works to prevent violent extremism without violating fundamental human rights;
 - Religious institutions guarantee freedom of religion and belief, tolerance, interfaith dialogue and oppose sectarianism, while proactively working to develop religious resources to ensure resilience against violent extremist ideas.

These are both very challenging areas. How do they apply to your situation?

7. The process of radicalization of young people involves many complex factors. What do you think could be done in your country to prevent radicalization among youth? What previous work has been successful in your view? Why has it been successful? What hasn't worked, and why?

*Session 5 Dialogue and mediation as tools to promote conflict prevention and resolution***CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND MEDIATION EXERCISE**

Discuss and **analyse** the following situation using the ideas of conflict and mediation that were presented:

A mediator is attempting to create an official dialogue between a small number of representatives of the Government in a neighbouring country and representatives of a violent Islamist movement, called the Harakat al-Mujahideen, from that same neighbouring country. The State is constitutionally secular and the Government is committed to secularism. The Harakat al-Mujahideen, which is illegal and banned in the country, is saying that the Government is illegitimate, there should be an Islamic State, and the constitution and criminal law should be based only on shari'a. The Harakat al-Mujahideen is saying that because the Government is persecuting Muslims (by banning groups), it is an obligation on all Muslims to overthrow the Government. The Harakat al-Mujahideen is mainly based in that country but it has armed supporters in several other countries in central Asia, including in Afghanistan, from which the USA is due to withdraw its forces from 2014. The representatives of both sides are refusing to talk to each other: they both say that the differences between them are too deep and are irreconcilable. The mediator is trying to persuade them that dialogue is necessary.

PART A

1. Who are the parties in this conflict?
2. What are the likely positions in this situation (write them down)?
3. What are the likely interests in this situation (write them down)?
4. Mediation requires voluntary participation. What is the situation here and can anything be done to persuade dialogue to happen?
5. Aside from the Government and the armed group, what other actors (domestically or regional) are there?
6. What arguments could the mediator use to persuade the two sides to engage in dialogue?
7. What could be a possible 'win-win' outcome here? Can you think of one? What could the final agreement be based on?
8. What are the potential risks and costs of the Government **negotiating** with the Harakat al-Mujahideen?
9. What are the potential risk and costs of the Government **refusing to negotiate** with the Harakat al-Mujahideen?
10. What kinds of factors could disrupt the mediation process?

11. Using your own knowledge and experience, could you make an informed assessment of what hidden interests there might be?

PART B

The political Islamic groups eventually agree to a formula in which there is a separation of religious institutions from the State, but they would not agree to a separation of religion from State. The Government agreed that religious freedom - the right to practise and promote (including proselytising) religion was a protected human right.

12. Do you think this is a 'win-win' situation?