# FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL: DEBATING SECURITY PLUS IN THE JORDANIAN CONTEXT

## A Report on the event held on April 26th 2018 at The Holiday Inn, Amman, Jordan

This summary report concerns the event hosted in Jordan on April 26th, 2018 as part of the Debating Security Plus (DS+) series. It was hosted on behalf of Friends of Europe with implementation support from The WANA Institute. DS+ is a unique global online brainstorming platform which gathers thousands of participants from the world of peace, security and defence -and beyond- to develop sustainable solutions to some of the biggest security problems facing the world today. Its report has set out 10 top recommendations addressing practical policy goals and shifts in security thinking, underpinned by a realistic roadmap for their implementation.

Goals of the workshop

This workshop in Amman was aimed at raising awareness about Debating Security Plus and its top ten recommendations from 2017, and to encourage discussion around two specific recommendations. While acknowledging that the DS+ event has been initially designed to contribute to upgrading European security policy, the workshop highlighted how the 2017 event went beyond Europe in a realization that such security threats –from global terrorism and nuclear proliferation to climate change and mass migration– know no borders; they are globally shared and hence require a comprehensive, global approach. As such, the participants were encouraged to register and take part in the upcoming global online debate in 2018.

This particular event focused on the 6th recommendation of the DS+ report, which suggests individuals and organisations should "think small to prevent and counter radicalisation strategies", and the 8th recommendation, which argues for the need to "develop proactive and coordinated responses to countering disinformation campaigns". These were both considered specifically in the Jordanian context. These recommendations were discussed in two sessions which were then structured around relevant discussion questions (See Annex 1 and 2). The participants focused on lessons learnt from their own experiences and recommendations to inform future policies. In this way, the workshop hoped to raise awareness around some of the difficulties faced when working on P/CVE in Jordan, to encourage a transparent discussion about how they can best be overcome, and to develop connections between relevant practitioners and stakeholders taking part in the event.

# Highlights from the Discussion

Session 1: Going Local of P/CVE: Challenges and Opportunities

The discussion started with stressing the need for better dialogue between workers, employers, and government ministries about improving social justice in the country. This is anchored in the realization that social justice cannot be achieved without an institutional framework as an important prerequisite for successful P/CVE measures at the local level. Here, the discussion highlighted that while it is imperative to 'go local' and 'think-small' when it comes to P/CVE, the broader and more structural issues ought to also be tackled for a sustainable long-term prevention.

Building on this, the importance of networking and rebuilding trust between public and private sectors, along with the local communities, was mentioned. It is precisely this lack of trust that leads to the disengagement of local actors from P/CVE efforts, which can further cause local communities to lack the capacity needed for a more proactive P/CVE role. In this regard, financial capacity is key.

Furthermore, in discussing P/CVE within the Jordanian context there needs to be a clearer strategy about whether a preventative and/or rehabilitative approach is being taken. While it is increasingly accepted that a preventative approach is crucial there has been little open discussion about rehabilitation measures. Given the potential for returnee fighters to Jordan it is important that rehabilitation is considered, however this is generally overlooked or ignored by the government or P/CVE practitioners, and thus remains a challenge.

Concerning the specific actors that are best placed to help with P/CVE efforts in local communities there was an agreement amongst participants about the importance of the ecosystem. This is composed of the triangle of the person him/herself, the family and the education system, and the realisation that no one actor is able to address this on their own. All aforementioned three sides of the triangle should contribute to building resilience, awareness, and tolerance. Furthermore, teachers and parents (particularly mothers) are often well placed to identify early signs of radicalisation. A representative from the Ministry of Education said these efforts should be started from a young age. The importance of positive role models was also agreed upon. However, there were multiple insights about alternative education channels such the family, mosque, or internet. Certain community values, such as attitudes towards outsiders, and acceptance of violence in the home, were also mentioned as contributing factors to radicalisation drivers. These are areas which could benefit from a future research focus.

A lack of social cohesion in local communities is often cited as a contributing factor to radicalisation and was thus discussed. While there has been no clear link shown between refugee communities and radicalisation the role of isolation and loss of identity which can come from a large influx of refugees, both for the refugees themselves and the host community, was discussed as a potentially contributing factor in someone's decision to join an extremist group.

Local civil society organisations were mentioned as playing an important role in promoting social cohesion, and the need for them to be more fully supported by donors. Building a feeling of ownership amongst communities needs to be encouraged, and could partially be achieved by involving youth in relevant discussions about what they want for and from their communities. When it comes to youth ownership and engagement in P/CVE efforts, there were two opinions: some participants highlighted that there is no need to reinvent the wheel, i.e. working within existing structures was presented as the wise option, and to other participants this effort rather necessitates the creation and promotion of new platforms which offer such opportunities. In this regard, it must be highlighted that some participants praised the ongoing governmental efforts which have aimed at promoting social cohesion, whether seen through the Ministry of Labour's establishment of units within the Syrian refugee camps, the Ministry of Education's measures against bullying in schools, or through the Public Security's inauguration of the Community Peace Center.

Lastly, the session highlighted that in order to effectively engage with and learn from local communities, it is imperative that they are given a voice and opportunity to contribute to program design, and to develop local and youth leadership. It was mentioned that often external actors or donors will want to focus on P/CVE in a community whereas the community themselves will have other priorities which they think are more important. However, such concerns are often under the human security umbrella and could thus be considered as elements of a holistic and comprehensive P/CVE approach.

Session 2: P/CVE Narratives: Design and Efficacy

The difference between counter and alternative narratives was highlighted at the beginning of the session and it was agreed that in general alternative narratives have more of a chance of being effective than simply a reactive counter message. Furthermore, it was agreed that while the message itself is important, the medium as well as the carrier of the message can be equally crucial for effective P/CVE efforts.

Mothers were mentioned as a potentially valuable source for disseminating effective alternative narratives in the household due to their unique position of influence. As a result, increased support and training should be given to women in local communities, including female preachers and civil society organisations, who are often asked for advice from mothers about how to respond to a child's change in behaviour or potential radicalisation.

Religious narratives were discussed, and the importance of training teachers in how to promote tolerance and understanding towards other religions, sects, or communities. Specifically, 'reforming the religious thought' was advocated as the first needed step. Avoiding a discussion around religion was deemed as unhelpful, despite the preference for such a tactic from international donors, and instead an approach needs to be taken which will be understood by the local communities. The majority of Jordanians are religious and thus it is inevitable that such discussions will be important and relevant to them. Preachers and media practitioners alike need to be suitably trained to understand the negative impacts of hate speech, and it was recommended that they should also be actively involved in P/CVE programs in prisons and rehabilitation centres.

The relationship between alternative narratives and tackling hate speech was discussed and in particular concerns were raised about the danger of a normalization of violence as a result of how often it is shown and shared on differing media outlets. Participants warned that the continued normalisation of violence, as observed today, could potentially lead to the moral disengagement of those concerned. Participants also suggested that certain voices from communities should be amplified in order to provide an insight into people's real life experiences of extremism and to de-glamorise violence or radical behaviour.

## Top Recommendations

The following recommendations were deducted from the general discussion and are based on the different interventions made by the participants (see annex 3 for the list of participants), as oppose to being clearly pointed out as guided recommendations to specific stakeholders.

Recommendations from Session 1, Going Local on P/CVE: Challenges and Opportunities

1. The participants called for a conversation between the Ministry of Education and the private sector about the exact labour/skills needed. This not only achieves a match between the market needs and the available human resources, but also makes the Ministry aware of what capacities they need to build, what curricular changes they need to integrate, what extra-curricular activities they need to cultivate, etc. Specifically, this is a long-term way of addressing the local economic drivers of violent extremism.
2. As far as building the capacity of teachers is concerned, some participants called for reinstating the teachers' training institute, which used to be the hub for teachers' training and development, all while ensuring that P/CVE training is mainstreamed in what the teachers are trained on.
3. Building local leadership; young people who are 'accessible' to their peers in local communities.
4. Finding/creating political platforms for young people to lay out/tackle their challenges and present their own list of 'priorities.'
5. Supporting and encouraging local spaces for arts (visual arts), theatre, music, etc.
6. Activating the role of "the local development" units at municipalities across Jordan. Not enough awareness is established on the developmental local role of municipalities, rather, the largest segment of the population sees the municipality from a pure service lens, which misses an immense untapped potential.

Recommendations from session 2: P/CVE Narratives: Design and Efficacy

1. Importantly, there was a clear consensus on the need to 'unify' the terms used when it comes to P/CVE; for the frequent interchangeable use of different P/CVE terms and vocabulary does not bode well for establishing clarity and focus on what is being addressed, and how.
2. In designing alternative narratives, it is crucial to account for how is the narrative conveyed, by who, and how it is made sustainable.

3. An effective way of designing/providing alternative narratives relates to amplifying local stories and voices, and linking them to a broader 'grand narrative'.
4. Need to go beyond the de-legitimization of radical narratives (counter-narratives) towards the de-glamorization of radical narratives (alternative positive worldviews)
5. Building the capacity of media institutions because hate speech is a direct result of either a low level of professionalism from the side of media institutions, or a genuine obliviousness about the damage being inflicted by such speech
6. In addressing the moral disengagement resulting from the normalisation of violence, it was recommended that stakeholders work on the normalisation of peace. This is done by designing and offering narratives without having them be 'attributed' to X or Y; rather, they have to be organic and authentic.

| TIME | EVENT |
|---|---|
| 09:30- 10:00 am | Registration and welcome coffee |
| 10:00 – 10:15 | Introducing WANA and the DS+ event |
| 10:20 – 11:10 | Session 1: Going Local on P/CVE: Challenges and Opportunities |
| **11:10 – 11:30** | **Coffee Break** |
| 11:30 – 12:20 | Session 2: P/CVE Narratives: Design and Efficacy |
| 12:20 – 12:30 | Wrap-Up |
| **12:30 – 1:30** | **Lunch** |

Annex 2: Discussion Questions for Each Session

**Session 1: Going Local on P/CVE: Challenges and Opportunities**

1. What are the challenges to implementing community-focused P/CVE efforts?
2. How can we support small-scale P/CVE community driven projects?
3. What are the challenges to successful social cohesion in local communities?
4. How has negative social cohesion in local communities impacted on drivers of radicalisation?
5. How does the recent emphasis on livelihoods approaches within refugee response programmes impact social cohesion and risk factors related to radicalisation?

**Session 2: P/CVE Narratives: Design and Efficacy**

1. What makes an effective alternative narrative?
2. How can existing small-scale initiatives to restrict hate speech online become a national campaign?
3. How can we best engage the private sector, including Internet and content providers, in promoting alternative narratives?
4. What role can government and especially local municipalities play?
5. What role can employers and the private sector in general play in promoting social cohesion and de-escalating conflicts between nationalities?

Annex 3: List of Participants

| | Name | Organisation |
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| 1 | Leen Aghabi | Royal Court, Office of His Majesty, Political Unit |
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| 2 | Mohannad Arabeyat | Generations for Peace |
| 3 | Najwan Al Dorgham | UNHCR |
| 4 | Hamza Al Hajaya | Al Qutrana Association for Social and Economic Development |
| 5 | Mohammad Nasser El Deen | Mercy Corps |
| 6 | Hind Maaytah | Mercy Corps |
| 7 | Lara Nassar | |
| 8 | Wasfi Al Taweel | Ministry of Culture – Acting Head of CVE Unit |
| 9 | Shorouq Al Shatnawi | The Jordanian National Commission For Women |
| 10 | Anwar Al Syouf | The Jordanian National Commission For Women |
| 11 | Patric Daru | ILO |
| 12 | Maen Al Momani | Ministry of Education |
| 13 | Abdullah Al Jbour | Hikaya Center (NGO) |
| 14 | Morad Al Qadi | Strong Cities Network |
| 15 | Amal Abu Jiris | Freidrich Eibert Stiftung |