

# Uniting against Radicalism

H A R U N   Y A H Y A

Radical tendencies, irrespective of their origin, are one of the most dangerous threats to world peace and security. Radicalism means to advocate fundamental and sudden changes by means of uncompromising and hard-line policies. In an environment where mutual acceptance and understanding have ceased to exist, people begin to feel animosity toward different ideologies or races without knowing what the other party really represents or believes.

In our own time, radicalism has emerged among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. This situation is abused and taken advantage of by proponents of Samuel Huntington's proposed *clash of civilizations* theory. The scale of radicalism's threat to world peace has become apparent in the 9/11 attacks on the United States and its consequences. The fact that these attacks are widely believed to have been carried out in the name of Islam resulted in a great deal of prejudice against Muslims and misunderstanding of Islam. Given the fact that Islam prohibits all acts of violence and aggression, most of the Islamic world condemned these terrorist attacks. Muslims prayed alongside Christians for the innocent lives lost, and American Muslims rushed to the aid of the victims. Despite this, prejudice against Muslims in the United States and some European countries has vastly increased, and incidences of violence have been reported. In order to eradicate radicalism and its damaging consequences, cultural and educational campaigns designed to reach all sections of society must be organized. We can list the topics and the responsibilities of various sections of society to be covered by this program, as follows:

An awareness that radicalism, an extremist tendency that is incompatible with true religious morality, must be defeated ideologically so that its claim to be acting in the name of religion can be exposed as false. People of all three divinely revealed religions must be told that they have a responsibility to be compassionate, patient, gentle, friendly, polite, and respectful. They have to be made aware that God forbids violence, aggression, and anything that harms innocent people. They must understand that it is wrong to go down that path. These efforts will ensure that all radicals will be recognized as misguided liars and thereby prevented from finding new recruits.

A program must be designed to give full and accurate information about all parties involved in the conflict, so that international dialogue becomes possible. An important step toward mutually friendly relations is the creation of an environment in which Jews, Christians, and Muslims can begin to know each other's beliefs, traditions, and rituals better. This can be done through cultural and educational programs. As people come to know each other better, they will realize that they have many things in common. This, in turn, will make reconciliation possible. Muslims, Christians, and Jews should tell one another about their respective worldviews in line with God's divine books of revelation, thereby preventing the mutual misunderstanding and radicalism caused by a lack of accurate knowledge.

The media must support the cultural activities necessary to create an environment conducive to international dialogue. They should refrain from sensationalism, which incites violence and segregation, and focus on broadcasts that encourage moderation and acceptance. Carefully prepared broadcasts by the western media will play an important role in eradicating the currently widespread anti-Muslim prejudice. Muslim media organizations, for their part, must refrain from broadcasts and opinions that incite hatred toward non-Muslims and concentrate instead on cultural and spiritual education in the Islamic world.

Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religious leaders and opinion makers must identify people who are bent on portraying myths and false beliefs as part of the religious code. They must teach people that God commands believers to be balanced and gentle, and that all extremism is contrary to religious morality. Political leaders must support this awareness campaign in order to prevent extremism in society and to prepare the ground for moderation.

These and similar joint efforts will eradicate the conditions conducive to radicalism. In Qur'an 2:113, God reveals that the Jews claimed that the Christians **"have nothing to stand on"** and vice versa. In reality, God knows best who is right, which is why genuine believers must seek to draw closer to God instead of accusing one another. The following verse reveals that people who act otherwise are wrong:

**The Jews say: "The Christians have nothing to stand on," and the Christians say: "The Jews have nothing to stand on," yet they both recite the Book. Those who do not know say the same as they say. God will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection regarding the things about which they differ. (Qur'an,**

2:113)

Eradicating the harm caused by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim radicals is possible only if all moderate, peace-loving, civilized, and genuinely religious people cooperate and form an alliance. Such an alliance will defeat those who present war and conflict as the only option, and disprove the assertions of those who advocate a show of force as the only way to achieve security and prevent further bloodshed, tears, and material damage.

### **Qur'anic Morality Forbids Extremism**

Islamic societies have been centers of mutual acceptance and goodwill toward non-Muslims throughout history, particularly in our Prophet's (may God bless him and grant him peace) time.

Radicalism is an ideological movement and political approach that is foreign to Islam. When radical groups are examined, it gradually becomes clear that they are, in reality, using a compilation of communist slogans and methods or that they have adopted the "**fanatical rage of the Time of Ignorance**" (Qur'an, 48:26). One of the common characteristics of such ideologies is their emotional force, an underlying cause of radicalism that is totally incompatible with God's commands. The Qur'an describes Muslims as people who control their anger and who are reasonable, moderate, and tolerant. Muslims must be polite and respectful when interacting with people of different beliefs and ideologies.

All Muslims must refrain from a harsh, angry, and challenging approach, for these are contrary to the Qur'an's method and essence. Instead, Muslims must adopt the accepting, moderate, calm, and rational approach described in the Qur'an. In other words, they must be role models for humanity and earn people's admiration for the morality of Islam and themselves. Muslims should also make great progress and produce superb works of science, culture, art, and aesthetics, as well as live Islam in the best way, and thus represent it to the world.