

IAPP Holds Conference on Radicalization at European Parliament

Tuesday, 05 December 2017 16:15

Written by: Jacques Marion, Vice-President, UPF Europe



Brussels, Belgium—A series of IAPP inaugural meetings in Europe in 2017 culminated in a conference in the European Parliament.

“Radicalization and Violent Extremism; Focus on Prevention” was the title of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace conference that was held on December 5 by UPF together with an affiliated organization, the Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP), and Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF).

Flavio Zanonato, an Italian member of the European Parliament and a member of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, was the host of the conference.

In a year plagued by repeated acts of terrorism, the conference theme represented a concern widely shared among Europeans.

Reflecting the belief that joint efforts from both parliamentarians and spiritual leaders are necessary to prevent radicalization, the conference’s two sessions focused first on the role of parliamentarians and second on religious factors.

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Session I: Pro-Active Policies for the Prevention of Radicalization: The Role of Parliamentarians

The first session was held at the European Parliament, in a prestigious room of the Altiero Spinelli Building. As the 120-seat room filled with participants from all over Europe, the HRWF Deputy Director introduced Member of the European Parliament Flavio Zanonato, the conference host, who spoke about the work of the European Parliament's Committee on Terrorism and the role of school education in preventing radicalization.

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Jean-Marie Bockel, a French senator and former government minister, reviewed conclusions of a recent French Senate report, which he had supervised, on the prevention of radicalization. Emphasizing its ideological dimension, particularly in the case of Islamic radicalization, he said that prevention policies should focus both on countering violent extremism and curtailing excessive *communautarisme*—a French sociological term that describes the tendency of minority communities to dissociate themselves from the wider society. He then described various prevention initiatives by local governments in France.

Dr. Afzal Ashraf, a specialist on counterterrorism at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom, gave a broad description of international factors leading to the current wave of terrorism throughout the world. Dr. Ashraf, who has a military background and experience in the Iraq War, warned that focusing exclusively on Islamic communities would be misleading and ineffective in dealing with the cause of the problem, which has much to do with various government policies.

Belgian scholar Brigitte Maréchal, the director of the Interdisciplinary Center for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World (CISMOC) of Louvain Catholic University, reflected on the fact that Europe faces a long-term meeting of civilizations regarding Islam. This requires a new mindset, adequate education and a respectful assessment of our differences, she said.

Seyran Ate?, a German lawyer and women's rights activist among Muslim women, who recently founded the first liberal mosque in Berlin, called for a focus on action to ensure that respect for human rights and democratic values is the basis for genuine religious education. She recommended that schools teach religion with a focus on ethics.

Karl-Christian Hausmann, a leader of the Christian Democratic Union in the city of Stuttgart and the chair of UPF-Germany, concluded the panel with an introduction to the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP). A project of the Universal Peace Federation, IAPP has been launched throughout the world starting in 2016. Promoting dialogue and cooperation beyond national, religious or party affiliations, IAPP encourages cooperation between political leaders and spiritual leaders to foster sustainable solutions to current issues.



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Session II: Roots and Prevention of Radicalization: Religious Factors

The second session was held in the Renaissance Brussels Hotel, located a five-minute walk away from the Parliament. Participants enjoyed a light meal and friendly interaction before listening to a short, enchanting harp performance by 13-year-old Solange Dellens.

Robin Marsh, the secretary general of UPF in the United Kingdom, moderated the session. Three of the panelists from the first session—the HRWF Deputy Director with Brigitte Maréchal and Seyran Ateş—were again on the panel and developed their presentations further. A fourth panelist was Camel Bechikh, a conservative Muslim activist from France, founder of *Association Fils de France*.

The HRWF Deputy Director explained about the current focus of Human Rights Without Frontiers: the crossing lines of religious freedom and security issues. She described her organization's involvement in recent legal cases in which extremist Muslim religious leaders

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were expelled from Europe because of political decisions.

Brigitte Maréchal emphasized the need for a deeper study and understanding of religion in Europe, adding that one should not confuse intercultural and interreligious dialogue. This new meeting of civilizations, she pointed out, comes after a long period in which religion was declining in Europe while religious sentiment was rising in the Islamic world. A genuine dialogue with Islam is needed, she said, whose outcome will depend on the choice of interlocutors.

Seyran Ate? called for a reformation in Islam, which, in her opinion, needs to begin with a focus on gender equality. She explained about her new “Stop Extremism” campaign in Europe, saying that genuine political action is needed to confront religious fundamentalist assaults against human rights and democratic values, in which “freedom and democracy are being used to destroy freedom and democracy.”

The last speaker, Camel Bechikh, began by affirming his attachment to Islam and patriotic feelings toward his country of France. A “caricature” of Islam, he warned, would lead to a wrong assessment of the problem and counterproductive solutions. He described how the amalgam between genuine Catholicism and abuses by a Catholic monarchy in France eventually led to a rise of atheism that undermined French society and partly caused the current confusion regarding marriage and family values. A similar amalgam between Islam and extremist violence, he said, would open the way for so-called “progressive ideologies” to undermine the core values promoted by all religions and eventually undermine democracy itself.

The audience responded to this discussion on very current issues with comments or questions—sometimes provocative—on religious extremism, the fate of Christian minorities in the Islamic world, and controversial family policies in Europe.

From the prestigious location of the European Parliament, with prominent experts dealing with pressing current issues, the conference opened new horizons for UPF activities in the coming years.

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Intervention of Flavio Zanonato MEP at the UPF Conference on "Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Europe: Focus on Prevention" at the European Parliament in Brussels.

Good morning,

It is a pleasure to be here today and to be the host of the first panel of this event here in the European Parliament. I am sure this will be a fruitful and interesting discussion, as I believe we are debating about one of the biggest challenges facing Europe (and not only Europe) in the last few decades. I want to thank all the experts that will speak today and all the guests for being here.

The series of recent terrorist attacks, as well as the various failed terrorist plots on European soil, have more than ever reinforced the popular awareness of the vulnerabilities that go hand-in-hand with the open democracies in the European Union. Governments, policy-makers, and politicians in most EU Member States feel the pressure of the population who call for adequate responses to these threats. On July 2017, the European Parliament decided to set up a Special Committee on Terrorism. The remit of this Special Committee is both broad and demanding: the committee will consult with the main actors involved in the EU institutions and with national experts on counter-terrorism and with specialists in the prevention of radicalisation.

At the end of its mandate, the Special Committee will draw up a report containing proposals for submission to the Council and the Commission. I am not part of this committee, but I will follow

closely its work. I believe that focusing only on the security aspects is counterproductive and worthless. In order to prevent radicalization we must create inclusive, more equal and less polarised societies. We need to fight racism and Islamofobia and work on all inequalities. Radicalisation is a complex and dynamic phenomenon based on a series of global, sociological and political factors. It does not correspond to one single profile, and affects men, women, and particularly young European citizens of all social origins, who share the common trait of feeling at odds with society. Because of terrorism and radicalisation, there is much stereotyping of religions, which is bringing up a renewed wave of xenophobia and intolerance. It is important to point out that the perverse misuse of religion is one of the causes of radicalisation. For this reason, one of the first things to do is to clarify that radicalization is not to be associated with any particular ideology or faith, but may occur in any of them.

Schools and education have an important role to play in preventing extremism through the promotion of integration within society and through the development of critical thinking and non-discrimination. Schools needs to teach the fundamental values and democratic principles of the Union. Member States must guarantee that their education systems respect and promote European values and principles. To do that, teachers need to be empowered to take an active stand against all forms of discrimination and racism.

To conclude, I believe that it is vital to engage in an intercultural dialogue with the various communities, leaders and experts, with a view to helping us achieve a better understanding and the prevention of radicalization. Thus, I leave the floor to the experts and I thank you all again for being here today.



Senator Jean-Marie Bockel describes the work of the territorial delegation of the French Senate at the UPF Conference on "Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Europe: Focus on Prevention" at the European Parliament in Brussels.

(N.B. This is an English translation of an abbreviated transcription by UPF Europe of Senator Bockel's intervention. Please refer to the video for Senator Bockel's original remarks in French.)

As we have a limited time, I will talk less about the diagnostic work that we did in the territorial delegation of our Senate and concentrate more on the proposals, the avenues of work on this issue of the prevention of radicalization from the point of view of the town halls and territories.

In a word, to avoid too many misconceptions: we are often dealing with individuals who are not psychologically disturbed, but fully aware of their actions. They enter this process without necessarily being crushed by social or personal problems. Of course, this also happens, but reducing this process simply to personal weaknesses would be too simple an explanation. I would like to point out two things that are in, but not limited to, the French debate.

The first is the question of secularism, you know it's a word that I'm not sure how to translate because, in France, it's a framework that allows the respect of all beliefs or non-beliefs, of all religions. However, secularism does not represent an ideal in itself, because otherwise you risk a form of excess of secularism or radical secularism or, in more pictorial language, laity, that is, to reduce everything to an approach involving almost an excessive rejection of beliefs and religions. We have this risk in France, whereas our youth aspires to an ideal, including in the

spiritual field. So, we have to put things into perspective; it's a French difficulty.

The other aspect is what is commonly called “communautarisme” in French (*similar to the concept of sectarianism, but applied to communities – Ed.*), it is true in all countries; it is withdrawal into the community with all the excesses that this can foster; withdrawal into oneself. However, sometimes, in France, we deduce from this that the community is not good. However, the community is very good: many commitments are much stronger, more efficient when they are in the context of the community, which also encourages respect for everyone. So, let's put things into perspective and I'll finish there for the diagnosis.

The proposals from the point of view of the town halls and territories came after having noted what were the good practices and good experiences, because currently no law stipulates that one must take action on these subjects [at the local level], because it is the business of the state, a matter of security, etc., but it is also a matter of education, of contact with the families. We came to Brussels, met the mayors of Vilvoorde and Molenbeek. Vilvoorde is the place from which dozens or even hundreds of jihadists came from at one point. There we met a mayor, a man with hands-on experience, a professional educator by profession, surrounded by young academics, graduates and researchers to address the concrete and practical dimension, as well as to reflect on what was really happening. I really liked this approach, which was both very hands-on and highly thoughtful. In one sentence: since the realization that they really have a problem, most of their work is conducted house to house, apartment to apartment, to meet the families before problems arise. There has been a dramatic decline. I will not talk about Molenbeek where the problem remains to be solved.

Local solutions when faced with radicalization depend on the structure of the state, whether it is federal or centralized, but the local governments must be partners. I was for 20 years Mayor of an Alsatian city, Mulhouse, and I was one of the pioneers of crime prevention policies and state-municipal partnerships on security. It was difficult to start with, because it was not in our culture and, over the years, prevention and safety actions were co-produced. And so I know that it is possible and it creates, between the local level and the representatives of the state: the local and police forces, schools and judges, a climate of confidence which is then transmitted from generation to generation. And I said to myself, basically, that the prevention of radicalization is a more complex, sensitive issue. We already know how to work together on the classic issues of delinquency, so it should be possible to put in place mechanisms in which local authorities can play a role in the case of radicalization. For example, in Sarcelles where many communities live, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, a policy of sharing information, awareness, training of staff in contact with the citizens, youth radicalization prevention, the fight against dropping out of school and against the switch to private, confessional, unregulated schools that are quasi-Koranic, Salafist ones.

In other places, including in a place in Burgundy, Chalon sur Saone, the town hall has formed a committee consisting of municipal officials to detect, from the outset, all of the weak signals they may encounter. In my region, in Colmar, the court officials in the public prosecutor's department, namely the prosecutor and the judges, have put in place a mechanism for people who have not necessarily been convicted, but are involved directly or indirectly in judicial proceedings potentially leading to their conviction, in conjunction with very controlled social associations, allowing them to enter a process of de-radicalization early on. We have also seen initiatives for children returning from jihad. The hands-on presence of adults at the educational, social and associative level must be strengthened, prepared and adapted to these issues. There are entire regions of the country which no longer have any structures for young people, apart from the inward-looking Salafist ones.

I am going to meet the Minister of Justice at the beginning of the year, because I think there is a desire to improve our prison system concerning this issue. We have fallen behind, so to catch up, why not start on a good foundation. As a person having had local and national responsibilities at different levels, I think that we must privilege today the philosophy of a substantial democracy that encourages convictions, the debate about values, the desire to engage, the ideal that is proposed, and not simply a procedural democracy that is content to speak of institutions, control or frameworks. This is essential, but insufficient. We have the capacity; it is in this way that the value of a society is judged, to overcome this evil. But there is still a lot to do.

Tuesday, 05 December 2017 10:02
Written by: Karl-Christian Hausmann



Karl-Christian Hausmann explains the purpose of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) at the UPF Conference on "Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Europe: Focus on Prevention" at the European Parliament in Brussels.

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests,

Let us begin by reminding ourselves that the quest for peace and security is at the heart of the EU.

The first political steps in Europe after 1945 were characterized by the desire for reconciliation and rebuilding trust and lasting peace between the peoples of Europe.

The key actors of this time, Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi and Robert Schuman shared this common vision.

The reconstruction of Europe was intended as a Peace Union. The key words of the first treaties such as world peace, common destiny, solidarity or new trust were revolutionary at that time.

Today, 72 years after the end of WW2, we can look back on possibly the longest relatively peaceful period of time we have ever had on this continent. We could even be satisfied with this and lean back, hoping it will continue like this forever.

However, every period in history has its specific challenges that cannot be ignored and need to be addressed as we do here for example in this conference with the problem of “Radicalization and Violent Extremism” in Europe. There are more problems in our time that need answers and practical solutions: the problem of mass migration, the ongoing problem of extreme poverty and the essential importance of good governance, not only for governments, but for all sectors of society, including the non-governmental and educational sectors, to mention just a few.

Parliamentarians are uniquely qualified to serve as advocates for peace and human development. As representatives of the people, they stand as mediators between government and civil society. Their experiences with the practical challenges related to law-making and public policy give them a unique set of skills and insights that are required in building a world of lasting peace.

Earlier this year, UPF launched the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), building on the foundation of work with parliamentarians over the past decade. The launch of the IAPP represents an effort to provide an informal network of parliamentarians who can work together collaboratively for the sake of peace and human development.

As an NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the UPF has an established presence on every continent and in almost every nation in Europe. It is building a wide network of individuals and organizations who seek to work together by going beyond divisions of nationality, ethnicity, race, religion and even political ideology, underscoring the common humanity of all people and living in one world, our common home.

IAPP will provide a forum for parliamentarians from all nations and political parties, allowing them to come together in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation to search for solutions to local, national, regional, and global problems.

IAPP understands that there are many very important organizations and associations of parliamentarians around the world, some formally organized as intergovernmental bodies and others informally associated. IAPP intends to work in a collegial, cooperative and supportive way with other parliamentary organizations wherever there is mutual interest and shared concern. The same spirit of support and cooperation applies to the mission and work of the United Nations, which IAPP affirms.

The primary objectives of IAPP include the following:

- To promote and encourage dialogue and cooperation among parliamentarians from nations around the world with the aim of promoting peace and human development. We promote working groups on various issues of international / national concern.
- To promote the cooperation of political leaders and spiritual leaders (IAPD) to foster sustainable solutions to current issues
- To promote interreligious dialogue and alliance
- To develop concrete projects involving young people with parliamentarians (Peace Road, Football for Peace, Cultural Programs, etc.)
- To develop educational programs to strengthen the family as the central and most fundamental institution of human society;

Parliamentarians are the representatives of the peoples of the world and, in that capacity, stand in a very special and important role in their nations and in the world. Given that we live in an interconnected world, and knowing that our problems are often global in nature, we are increasingly aware that global solutions to our world's problems must be sought.

It was Victor Hugo, the French poet, who once said that nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come.

We believe and hope that IAPP will be a significant contributor to peace and human development for Europe and all of humanity.

Thank you very much.



Intervention of Camel Bechikh at the UPF Conference on "Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Europe: Focus on Prevention" in Brussels (Session 2).

N.B. This is an English translation of an abbreviated transcription by UPF Europe of M. Bechikh's intervention. Please refer to the video for his original remarks in French. Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Universal Peace Federation.

I am quite embarrassed by what has been said since earlier, especially by my neighbor, because I perceive a very caricatural and ideologized speech in the sense that, when we are faced with an adversary in society, in order to combat them, we tend to misrepresent them. Hearing about Muslims or Muslim society makes me want to laugh, so the previous presentation gives the impression of a homogeneous sociological element. However, it is anything but homogeneous; like any other social or religious group, Muslims are deeply heterogeneous. Most everyday Muslims want to ride in a car under 2 years old, take 25-year bank credits, watch reality TV shows and own the latest iPhone.

Among them, indeed, some engage a rediscovery of their faith. I am from the generation that, in the early 90's, rediscovered their faith and I must say that, far from the caricatures, for many, the rediscovery of my faith has been a strong element of integration, particularly through my studies in the sense that, children of immigrants we are and, for many of us, religious practice has allowed us not to be stuck in a process of cultural reproduction. That is to say, religious

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practice has inspired in us an awareness that has brought about a rupture in terms of social elevation compared to the working class generation of our parents. I, who have been a member for almost 25 years of the Union of Islamic Organizations of France that is said to be close to the Muslim brotherhood, I have known, within this federation, only elements and trajectories of social success with, indeed, a significant conservative leaning in societal terms.

It is for this reason that I participated in the co-founding of the “Manif pour tous”, which constituted the main opposition to same-sex marriage. I am a conservative Muslim and have no reason to be embarrassed about it. In fact, I'm rather proud of it. The fact that some mosques are open to homosexuals makes me very happy, because homosexuality is not a reason for religious excommunication. So the caricature leads to a false diagnosis, not allowing a sick body to be healed efficiently. If we have a fantasized view of Muslims in Europe or the world, let us consider Muslims through the ideologized eye of progressivism which would like to make gender theory, homosexual marriage and euthanasia the new norms; I say no, I am neither for homosexual marriage, nor for gender theory, nor for euthanasia.

On the other hand, I think that all religious currents, whether Muslim or not, must be able to express themselves without being demonized. Indeed, among Muslims, there are radical and violent elements. They must be eradicated: zero tolerance. In the past, Protestants suffered from Catholic violence in France. But Catholics have suffered from Protestant violence in Holland. Communist ideology has produced violence. Whether it is religion, philosophy or political theory, at some point, there will be elements of violence. Should we, however, caricature everyone because of these minority elements? Obviously not: 90% of the victims of terrorism are Muslim. And the conservative discourse cannot be neutralized, especially the one

that considers marriage between a man and a woman as the norm, the family unit as the basis of society, and the masculine and feminine genders as differentiated. If this causes me to be called retrograde, dogmatic and fundamentalist, then so be it.

I wish, with my Catholic friends in France, to go unnoticed. For example, I come from a country to which I am fiercely attached. The French press defines me as nationalist. I define myself as a patriot. I am attached to France and its Catholic anthropology. In the 17th century, there was the Enlightenment, a deeply religious term for people who distorted the idea of ??religion. And then, there was the French Revolution in the eighteenth century during which we beheaded the king because he was the guarantor of a religious order and, in 1905, a little more than a century later, we separated religion and state. Then, in 1968, it was forbidden to forbid, and in 1974, abortion was legalized. Finally, in 1999, the civil union between two people of the same sex became possible and in 2014, it was the same-sex marriage. We are now talking about assisted reproduction, that is, the possibility for a lesbian couple to have children. The French government is currently legalizing the fact that a male homosexual couple can buy a child abroad and give them French papers very normally and freely, a way of legalizing what is called surrogacy.

What I mean by that is that in the seventeenth century a caricature of Catholicism was produced. It allowed an atheistic revolution. This atheism has produced a disruption of values ??that has led to a negation of the values ??of societies and the human being. If we caricature Muslims today in the name of so-called progressive ideologies, by amalgamating the Muslim, the Islamist, the radical and the terrorist, we are killing one of the main strongholds of resistance to this anti-religious post-modernity, because if, in the seventeenth century, a wind blew over Europe to say no to religion, I believe that the country to which I am fiercely attached, which was named the eldest daughter of the church, is today the first consumer of antidepressants. God has been expelled from society and, inevitably, instead of the values ??initiated by God, we find the values ??of the anti-God.

I am here today because I believe that all people, whether believers or not, who are aware of the natural identity of the human being, of the natural family, must be aware of the major elements that this post modernity is bringing in terms of the destruction of the fundamentals of the human being. I have always refused the idea that your movement be called a sect, because I consider, as a religious liberal, that no one has the right to tell you what to believe in or not to believe in. Alas, the caricatural attitude towards Muslims largely promoted by the progressive movement, you yourself have been victims of and this has prevented you from becoming a religion in its own right, especially in France. Misrepresenting a problem only reinforces it.

Madam can open an LGBT mosque. Why not? On the other hand, to produce a caricatural speech about Erdogan, the Muslims in general, the Sharia, a word that is very scary because we cut off the hand of thieves and we kill women in the name of this law. This is meaningless: Sharia means code, for example how to pray and to fast. Within Sharia, some elements must be deeply modified, reformed. It is the work of theologians who work on this issue, and who are sometimes even condemned to death by DAECH. However, caricaturing the whole of Muslim practice to make it a retrograde element will only help to split up and separate the whole camp from natural values. I have no problem with the Christian identity of France or the Muslim identity of Turkey. I do not want today's post-modernity, which proposes the commodification of

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children, to use the caricature of religion to impose this abomination that contradicts natural law.