



The Untapped Solution to Terrorism

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Religious extremism is the underlying cause of terrorism. The only solution for this problem is for the religions themselves to recognize their responsibility for the zealots of their own creation. They must speak out against violence and deaths perpetrated in the name of their religion and shun any persons who pervert the name of their religion to support violent and destructive goals.

There are people in the world, right now, who believe it is their religious duty to annihilate millions of innocent people and take their own lives in the process. They expect to be blessed and rewarded for these murderous and suicidal acts. How did the universal religious message of love, compassion and hope, common to all religions, become perverted to promote murder and suicide? Moreover, how can religion, which forbids murder and suicide, be used as justification for killing millions in cold blood? Unless something is done, these terrorists will eventually gain access to weapons of mass destruction, placing millions of lives at risk. Governments are taking extraordinary actions to try and prevent terrorist attacks. Billions are spent on defense and Homeland Security, and yet not a penny is spent to address the cause of almost every conflict on earth – religious extremism. Terrorism looms like a black cloud on us every single day. The extremist, who exists in every religion, is the tail that wags the dog. When a Muslim kills himself and others in a café, or a Jew assassinates the Prime Minister, or a Christian bombs an abortion clinic, killing doctors and nurses, it's the same thing – a perversion of the word of all of the religions. When one of these events occurs, the truly pious typically remain silent, while the name of their religion is sullied and degraded by these misguided acts. The solution to terrorism, religious extremists and world conflicts is in our hands today. Governments cannot do it alone; they need the religious of the world to be active collaborators to eliminate this blight. It is time that we call upon the leaders of the world's religions to become loud and continuous allies in the battle against those who have risen up from within their own ranks to wage war on humanity, not leaving it up to governments alone to respond to the disastrous effects. Religious leaders must loudly condemn these violations of religious doctrine to their own members, to members of other religions, and to the secular public. It must be clearly known and understood that persons who have used the holy name of religion for violence and death are universally condemned by the religions whose name they have sullied and mocked. The Internet and email are powerful communication tools and should be used along with our traditional print media, radio and television, as well as billboards and leaflets. It is the duty of the secular and the non-believing among us to use their influence and power in numbers to influence the religious leaders to openly condemn acts of violence. Though this conflict is rooted in religious peoples, the secular also have a role in preventing further bloodshed. Ultimately, all will suffer from a worldwide conflict which all had the power to prevent. It is not always easy to speak out. The fear of offending others or being misunderstood and misquoted in the media is great. The truly faithful leaders must not allow their fear of offending others to stand in the way of promoting the true universal religious message, which protects life and forbids murder and suicide. To be effective, this message must reach those within the religion and outside it, thus forging a unity among their own members, along with other religiously inspired persons and members of secular society, with the result that the zealots are cut off as the cancer that they are.

If government has a role, it is investigation and enforcement of existing laws. Terrorist operations are funded through fraudulent fundraising and organized crime, such as the drug trade. Governments can investigate the funding sources of terrorists and stop the fraudulent activity. Tragically, some of the funding for these destructive acts has come from well-intentioned persons who have given to various charities. Where laws are broken, the government has a role to track down and punish the offenders. The ultimate cure, however, must come from religious authorities who loudly correct the deliberate misquotes and interpretation of the holy books and prophetic language which the extremists have defiled in order to achieve their evil agendas. Many religious leaders are quick to speak out to condemn or commend political entities and the actions of sovereign nations, but are remarkably remain silent when a blatant offense against the universal message of religion is committed. Political commentary and rhetoric by the leaders in our houses of worship must include the condemnation of evil acts.

The misguided who are fooled into following false prophets can be reached with the truth, but will only accept that truth when it comes from their religious brethren, not from governments. Throughout history, religiously motivated violence has been tolerated by far too many of us, leading to far too many tragedies. For the first time in history, a new strategy that will work is feasible: Rally the forces of good, religious and secular alike, to come together to stop the violence created by rogue individuals who manipulate others into violence, while falsely using the name of religion simply to advance their own personal agendas. ✉e-mail:

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