

### **Building on the GCTF's Rome Memorandum:**

#### **Additional Guidance on the Role of Religious Scholars and other Ideological Experts in Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programmes**

**Note:** This document will be submitted to the GCTF to provide additional guidance to GCTF Members States and other countries in their efforts to incorporate the Rome Memorandum into their own programmes to address violent extremism in prison settings. This document summarizes the conclusions/findings of the expert workshop convened by the Spanish Government and UNICRI in Madrid, on 29-30 October 2013.

#### **A Team Approach**

- Terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. Several terrorist groups abuse and misrepresent religion to justify their actions. Religious scholars play a critical role in rehabilitation/reintegration programmes.
- Religious scholars should be fully integrated as a member of rehabilitation/reintegration teams in prison environment. Their work may be different, in some respects, to other experts involved in these programmes – such as psychologists, social workers and educators. They should nonetheless work closely with all members of the team. Each has his own special contribution to make.
- Other members of the rehabilitation/reintegration team should have a clear understanding of the role of religious scholars in this process, to ensure that their efforts are complementary, mutually supportive and well-articulated.
- In the process of rehabilitation religious scholars should work particularly closely with the psychologists in understanding the inmate's psychological makeup, which include modifying their views toward violent extremism.
- Religious scholars should have a role in the development of evidenced based programmes which make up the overall rehabilitation/reintegration strategy.

### **Strong Legislative/Legal Basis**

- Legislation/laws have a major effect on the work of religious scholars in prison. A strong legal framework serves as an essential guide to their work and in institutionalizing their role in the therapeutic community operating in prison setting.
- Religious scholars should endeavor to ensure that legislation does not have unintended consequences on their work. It is important for religious scholars to contribute to the legislative process and to the enhancement of relevant legislation, which can have an impact on their work.

### **Resources**

- Member States should dedicate sufficient funding for the work of religious scholars in the light of their critical importance in the rehabilitation/reintegration process. Adequate resources will lead to better designed and managed programmes, which will lead to tangible results.
- Resources should be funneled to the areas of greatest need. Ongoing analysis should be conducted to ensure resources are allocated where the greatest societal impact will be achieved.

### **Specialized Training/Qualifications**

- Not every religious scholar will be well suited for the therapeutic functions. Religious scholars who are incredibly knowledgeable and experienced in their pastoral work may find it difficult to operate in this environment, as the rehabilitation of violent extremists requires a different set of skills and aptitudes. Assessing the scholars' willingness and ability to work in the therapeutic environment should be a key factor in the selection process.
- Governments should provide religious scholars with specialized training related to their functions before they begin this work. They will need training both in how to operate in the prison setting and in dealing with inmates, and in making the transition from the traditional pastoral role to include a more advocacy position in the therapeutic community. Basic training in psychology would also be an important component of the

training for the religious scholars, as their work will involve a large psychological dimension.

- Member States should also ensure that religious scholars have adequate knowledge of the terrorist organizations - especially their ideology - inspiring the detainees they will be dealing with, so that they can prepare themselves to come up with the most appropriate arguments and justifications to counter their lines of thought.
- In terms of personality types, governments should consider charismatic religious scholars for these positions which require them to engage in countering the ideology of inmates. Recruiters for terrorist groups are often charismatic figures themselves. Having charismatic figures in the rehabilitation programme is equally important. Religious scholars should demonstrate established leadership skills, integrity, both in the prison setting and the community, competence in their theological knowledge, and enjoy the full support of their religious communities.
- Governments should ensure that those religious scholars engaged in the therapeutic work have the functions included in their official duties, in addition to their pastoral responsibilities.

### **Classification of Inmates**

- Member States should have an effective system to classify inmates at the outset. Identifying the leaders and ideologues, the foot soldiers or followers and the “opportunists” is particularly important, as very different approaches and interventions may be needed for each category of inmates.
- Segregating leaders and followers may lead both groups to be more receptive to religious scholars’ outreach – and to rehabilitation/reintegration in general. It is expected that the ideologues will be reluctant to change their views or behaviors. They may have more space for change when they are separated from their followers. Success with the leaders of these groups can have a broader, wider ranging impact on the followers and “foot soldiers” – who may be unwilling to consider adjusting their views without the support of the leaders.
- Religious scholars may need to adjust their approach based on background, knowledge-level of the inmate and their position in the organization. Religious scholars may be able to use more complex, in-depth arguments with more knowledgeable members, while simplifying their narrative and counter-narratives with other followers.

- Classification of inmates should be an on-going process. As inmates are closer to release they should be re-evaluated to assess progress and aptitude toward rehabilitation/reintegration. The religious scholar, with their natural connection to the community at large, should be involved in these points of transition.

### **Timing of Interventions**

- The timing of the religious scholars' interventions with inmates is important. At what point in the rehabilitation process an intervention by religious scholars would be most effective will differ from person to person, with the therapeutic team making the decision regarding the best timing to expose inmate to the religious scholars. For some inmates, the period immediately following sentencing will be ill-timed, as they are still adjusting to life in the prison environment, while for others, this type of outreach might give them immediate hope for their post-prison life. Determining when to intervene should be made on a case by case basis.

### **Maintaining Independence**

- Religious scholars will need to demonstrate to the inmates that they have some measure of independence from the State and from prison authorities. Some inmates often entertain strong, negative views on the State, and association with the Government institutions will make it difficult for the religious scholars to establish the necessary relationship – based on trust - with the inmate.
- One possibility for Member State is to make use of external religious scholars for the rehabilitation/reintegration programmes, as opposed to prison chaplains, often focusing on pastoral care, as they are likely to be viewed as less tied to the Government.
- The religious scholars would contribute to convince the inmates that “the system” and the State are not opposed to them as persons. The interest of the authorities is to counter violent extremism. Should the inmate adjust his/her behavior, the Government would no longer be interested in their activities and would assist them with their reintegration into society.

### **Building a Relationship of Trust**

- The key in religious scholars' success in helping change inmates' behavior and views is to develop a relationship based on trust with inmates. This type of relationship is essential for meaningful conversations and interactions. It is important for the religious scholars to recognize, however, that the time needed to develop a relationship of trust will vary from person to person.
- Religious scholars must have credibility with the inmates. There are a number of different criteria involved in the establishment of the necessary credibility and trust.
  - Religious scholars should have the appropriate professional background and experience, education and credentials in this area.
  - Religious scholars should only make those promises to inmates that they can effectively deliver; making promises they can't fulfill lead to a loss of credibility, preventing the development of a relationship based on trust.
- Before beginning in-depth discussions on religious subjects, the religious scholar should first come to know the inmate personally, and keep the discussions focused on family, welfare and other similar topics.
- The meetings would also be done in a relaxing atmosphere, as opposed to a prison cell. This will likely lead to freer, more productive open dialogue and discussions.
- The relationship cannot be a one way dialogue, and religious scholars should promote interactive discussions.
- Inmates should be treated humanely, with respect and dignity by all the prison personnel. If the inmate is being badly treated by others in the correctional environment, such as the corrections staff, there is little chance of success for the rehabilitation initiatives, regardless of the skills and knowledge of the religious scholars.
- Participation in the rehabilitation programmes should be on a voluntary basis. Such programmes generally do not work if inmates are forcedly enrolled into them.
- Beyond employing the religiously-based counterarguments, religious scholars can also play a role in other areas, including promoting tolerance and spirituality, and helping the inmate learn to manage their emotions.
- In developing the individual one-on-one relationship with the inmates, the religious scholar also needs to establish himself as a person of stature and a leader among the broader prison population. Should the inmates lose respect for the religious scholar or

begin to question his knowledge, qualifications or abilities, they will often begin to defer to or seek guidance from other inmates who hold themselves out as religious experts.

- It is important for the Government to develop and maintain the overall credibility of the rehabilitation/reintegration programmes. Government could consider having programmes for non-religious threats as well, to demonstrate that they are not focusing on religion.

### **Outreach to the Communities/Families**

- Religious scholars should also play a role outside of the prison setting, to help facilitate the inmate's reintegration into the community.
- Religious scholars should strive to develop relationships with the inmates' families while the individual is incarcerated. The families are often left in difficult situation during the time their relative is in prison – particularly in cases where the inmate was the primary breadwinner. Assistance would be welcome during this difficult time. These relationships can be very important in the post-release period.
- Religious scholars working in the communities, while not formally associated with the rehabilitation programmes, can play a particularly useful role. They may already enjoy the trust of the community and the network of contacts who can be of great assistance to the inmate and their family.
- Religious scholars who work in prisons settings should attempt to develop relationships with the scholars who are based in the communities. Working together, they can help facilitate a smoother transfer and transition back to the communities of the detainees and make full use of the social network, particularly the family.

### **Protecting Religious Scholars**

- Governments need to ensure that they take adequate steps to protect the religious scholars, who are often putting themselves and their families at risk for their security with this type of work. If religious scholars are overly concerned about their safety, they are likely to be ineffective in their work.

### **Vetting Scholars and Material**

- Governments should take steps to vet religious scholars before they are allowed to work in the rehabilitation setting to ensure that their substantive knowledge and views are acceptable, in line with the therapeutic objectives and are not likely to result in counterproductive activities.
- There should be strict rules and guidelines governing the activities of religious scholars in prison setting. Violations of these rules and guidelines should be taken seriously, with prompt appropriate administrative or legal measures taken in response.
- Governments should also vet material that is used by religious scholars and that is brought into the prison setting, to ensure that it is supportive of the rehabilitation goals and does not condone or support extremist ideology.
- The institutions should develop clear guidance and policies on the type of literature which is acceptable/unacceptable and enforce these policies and guidance rigorously.

### **Restorative Justice**

- Restorative justice – which provides the victim an opportunity to directly confront the perpetrator – can be an important part of the rehabilitation process of the perpetrator and bring closure to the victim and reparation where feasible. The religious scholar can play a role in facilitating this process, and can advise at what stage this should take place and when the inmate, in particular, may be most receptive. Restorative justice is a powerful tool as terrorism, at its core, de-humanizes others. Restorative justice – and to some extent, the rehabilitation/reintegration process – seek to re-humanize all sides in a conflict. The prison environment itself can also be a de-humanizing environment. Introducing restorative justice into this setting can be a powerful antidote.