

FOLDER RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Radicalisation
and how it's relevant to you

FOLDER FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS

This folder is a short version of TERRA's manual, "Radicalisation and how it's relevant to you." It contains brief tips on how you might recognize and deal with radicalisation in the population you come into professional contact with, and how you might participate in a community approach.

Radicalisation can be a topic of concern for religious leaders. You may see young people drifting away from the community towards more radical groups, changing their behaviour, appearance or interactions with you or with their peer group. You also encounter parents who are worried about their children.

This folder gives a short overview of possible signs of radicalisation, and advice on what to do about them, so that you can support and work preventatively with radicalising individuals and their families. In your role of teaching a community, you can stimulate resilience amongst youth, addressing the topics they might struggle with. Your teachings may also support parents in discussing ideology if their children develop radical ideas.

You don't have to become an expert on terrorism – but you are already an expert on teaching and caring for the people within your community, and through that expertise you may be able to play a vital role.

*Help each other towards piety and righteousness.
Do not help each other towards sin and enmity.*

[Qur'an 5:2]

Possible signs of radicalisation

Although no checklist of "symptoms of radicalisation" exists, there are some signs which might indicate that a radicalisation process is underway. The element of change is crucial.

BE ALERT TO CHANGE IN:

- Religious practices, for example extreme increase in devotion, a stronger emphasis on apocalyptic beliefs;
- Attitude towards society and authority: less belief that they are effective;
- Sense of belonging: either lack of belonging to the general context -v or increased sense of belonging to a specific radical group;
- Clothing and appearance: A sudden increased devotion to prescriptions on clothing style and hair wear, or the use of symbols from Jihadist groups on clothes or personal attributes;
- Verbal expressions: new word choice to include terms used by radical groups, change in personal narrative, argumentative behaviour or provocative questions, challenging your beliefs and values;
- Way of making contact with you/ social group/ family;
- Names, using aliases;
- An increased sense of anger at society, and less participation in it.

When **recruitment** is taking place, this may be visible in the form of new faces in the community, or new groups hanging around mosques. Recruiters may take advantage of mosques for 'talent-spotting' and as points of first contact, but once a contact has been established, they usually move away from the mosque and continue the recruitment in closed locations, such as private flats and makeshift prayer halls. So, when young people suddenly or gradually withdraw from the community, this may also ring alarm bells.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Be extra alert to the development of young people with social or familial ties to a radical group.
- In your sermons, include young people by using language they understand, and by addressing the issues they have to deal with.
- Invest in knowledge of mainstream tradition and Sharia.
- Stimulate your community in supporting young people in their struggle with identity, for example by mentoring or by creating possibilities for the individual to develop their talents.
- Support your community in challenging the "us versus them" thinking, by addressing their role in society in your sermons, and by sharing knowledge on radicalisation and the counterbalance a community can offer.
- Teach critical and nuanced thinking, offering tools with which to analyse radical narratives that young people may get exposed to, especially on the internet.
- Make young people going through a hard time feel supported by you and the religious community.
- When you suspect a group inside the mosque of radicalisation or recruitment, it is recommended not to send them away for fear of the authorities, but to stay in touch with the group and prevent them from easily getting isolated.
- If you feel that a radical group is actively recruiting within your mosque, contact the police.
- Where possible, provide support to the family of the radicalising individual.

WORKING WITH A COMMUNITY APPROACH

Prevention of radicalisation benefits from an approach which enables different professionals to exchange concerns about the young people they work with. This 'community approach' could involve for example teachers, social workers, police officers, local governments. They can discuss a case together, and from their different perspectives make a better estimation if someone's situation is worrying. So far, it is not very common in Europe that mosques play a role in this community approach, but there are some positive examples and we would strongly recommend that you discuss joining such a network with your board.

You can share your concerns at any point with this group. The sooner a group of professionals is aware of a possible problem and able to share information, concerns and decisions on whether or not to take action, the better.

Besides, with your expertise you can also add a lot of value to such a network. Your knowledge of cultural and religious customs and beliefs may help them interpret issues they may have with a person in the right way, and chose an approach that is appropriate in the given situation.

This folder is a summary of a short manual which goes deeper into the signs that a person may be radicalising, offers more tips about how to act if you do, how to use your community in building resilience, and how to support parents. It also reflects on the role you could play in a network approach, together with for example social services and law enforcement.

The manual is available on www.terratoolkit.eu (free of charge).

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Partners in TERRA are Impact, National knowledge and advice centre for psychosocial care concerning critical incidents, partner in Arq Psychotrauma Expert Group, The Netherlands and The Network of Associations of Victims of Terrorism (NAVt) and the Association of Aid to Victims of March 11th (AAVM11) Spain.



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