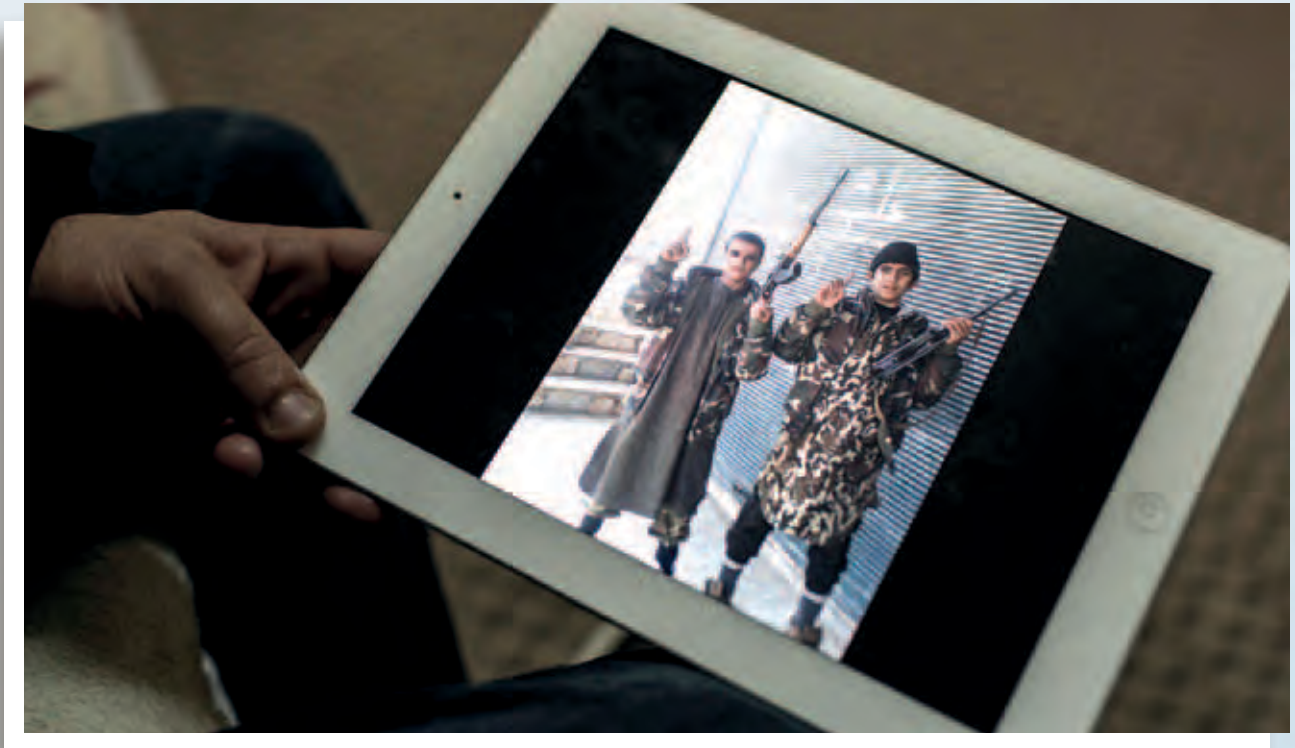




THE SAMIR KASSIR FOUNDATION

# RECEPTION AND PERCEPTION OF RADICAL MESSAGES



## Pilot Study

June 2016

With the support of



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the  
Netherlands



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## About the project

This report represents a first contribution by the Samir Kassir Foundation (SKF) to the ongoing and growing debate on the role of communication in the radicalisation process and the mechanisms to prevent or counter violent extremism (CVE). The primary focus of this research is communication by and about the Islamic State and did not include communication by and about militant Islamist organisations from other ideological and sectarian backgrounds.

It is based on qualitative opinion and media consumption research conducted in February and March 2016 with Lebanese audiences in Tripoli, North Lebanon, West Bekaa and among Syrian refugees with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands under contract No. 28141.

The project was implemented by a steering committee led by academic and policy consultant Drew Mikhael and comprised of SKF Executive Director Ayman Mhanna, SKF Programs Coordinator Nassim AbiGhanem, academic and senior researcher Nidal Ayoub and social media communication specialist Marie-Thérèse Corbani.

The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of the Samir Kassir Foundation and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

### Steering Committee

**Drew Mikhael** holds a PhD from Queen's University Belfast, focusing on refugee affairs, conflict management and Middle East politics. He is a lecturer at Queen's University Belfast and a post-doctoral research associate at Durham University. He has provided consulting services since 2009 and researched and delivered policy recommendations to different organisations on issues of human rights, refugee policies, security sector and educational reform in Europe and the Middle East and North Africa. He has 13 years of facilitation experience, having designed and delivered training programmes to a variety of clients in Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Jordan and Italy, primarily working with at-risk young people.

**Ayman Mhanna** is, since September 2011, the Executive Director of the Beirut-based Samir Kassir Foundation, the leading press freedom NGO in the Levant region. In January 2016, he also became the Executive Director of the Global Forum for Media Development, a network of 200 media development and journalism assistance organisations. He previously served as Senior Program Officer for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. He was also a lecturer on the Master's programme at Saint Joseph University's Faculty of Economics, teaching Policy Development and Communications. Ayman holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Saint Joseph University in Beirut and a Master's degree in International Affairs from Sciences Po Paris.

**Nidal Ayoub** is a journalist and broadcaster with 21 years of experience. She worked for major Lebanese and Middle Eastern TV channels including, but not limited to, LBCI, Future TV, BBC Arabic and Saudi TV. She has been teaching journalism at Antonine University since 2010 and Holy Spirit University of Kaslik since 2014. She is the President of the *Association francophone de journalisme* (AFEJ) and has conducted in-depth media consumption and media monitoring research for various local and international organisations. She is a documentary producer whose work received international awards in European and American film festivals.

**Nassim AbiGhanem** is the Programs Coordinator for the SKeys Center for Media and Cultural Freedom at the Samir Kassir Foundation. He holds a Master's degree in International Politics and International Relations from the University of Manchester focusing on Development, US Foreign Policy, State-Building, Civil Society and Transitional Justice. He previously worked as Research Coordinator at the Arab NGO Network for Development. He collaborates with the British Academy in Lebanon as a lecturer in Cardiff Metropolitan University's programme in Lebanon teaching modules on International Political Economy, Business and Human Rights.

**Marie-Thérèse Corbani** is a social media communication specialist and a community manager for major political communication initiatives. She holds a Master's degree in Political Communication from Université Paris 1 – Sorbonne and a Master's degree in Political Science from Saint Joseph University in Beirut. Her work has covered a wide array of topics ranging from electoral campaigns to radical and extremist groups. After working for Quantum, the leading communication firm in the Middle East, she has joined the French Government's Information Service unit in Paris.

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Rationale and Objectives

The popular uprisings in several Arab countries in 2011 brought hope that democratic regimes would emerge, respond to citizens' aspirations, and put an end to long decades of corruption, nepotism and repression. However, various factors contributed to derailing the uprisings including, but not limited to, lack of vision and organisation among opposition groups, violent repression of the uprisings, and the growth of radical Islamist groups. The climate of violence and chaos, in and of itself, is a fertile environment for the emergence of radical movements, especially if such movements develop effective ways of spreading their ideology and attracting new members.

The rise of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria, in addition to the gruesome violence it has been demonstrating against local civilians, foreign hostages and heritage sites, was also accompanied by a new type of communication strategy. IS's communication methods have included all forms of media: from word-of-mouth to social networking sites and advanced audiovisual productions.

All major intelligence, security and diplomatic services across the globe have focused in the last few years on trying to understand IS's communication strategy, the methods the group and other radical organisations use to grow an audience, and develop effective counter-narratives to what is being spread. Most of the research has targeted the source of radical messaging: how radical groups craft their messages, the channels they use to spread their words, and the accounts that echo their narratives. Additionally, resources have

been allocated to develop counter-messages that oppose fundamentalist and violent interpretations of Islamic teachings.

One aspect has remained missing from the research undertaken at the global level: understanding the dynamics that take place at the very end of the 'message food chain,' i.e. how a citizen – the end user – comes across the radical message. Without a thorough understanding of how citizens receive and perceive information and messages from and about radical groups, many well-intentioned counter-violence and counter-narrative initiatives will be ineffective. Therefore, attempts to counter the messages spread by radical groups will fail, because they would not be using channels and vectors that reach the end recipient on the ground.

The Samir Kassir Foundation conducted in-depth qualitative research through focus groups gathering Lebanese citizens at the grassroots level, from communities in Tripoli, North Lebanon and West Bekaa, in villages close to the Syrian border, which constitute a target group for radical organisations' communication. This pilot study also included Syrian refugees living near Beirut. It is based on the assumption that it is only after understanding the channels through which citizens at the very end of the communication chain actually receive messages, and what conditions make them more receptive to such messages, that effective anti-radicalisation strategies can be elaborated.

The pilot study's objectives were to:

- Identify the exact channels through which the end media consumer receives messages;
- Identify what in the message itself makes



it more or less prone to stick in the recipient's mind; and

- Identify what in the recipient's environment makes the person more or less receptive to a message.

## 2. Major Findings

**1. Hyper-local factors** were the most important components in both radicalisation and counter-radicalisation. Participants placed significant emphasis on the role of 'heads' of the neighbourhoods (كبير الحارة) who are the "only ones able to warn and convince young people against wrongdoing." Heads of neighbourhoods have personal qualities that build trust within communities and make them effective first responders. These qualities can be summarised as follows:

- A credible, non-corrupt person who does not use his position to 'swindle' or make a profit;
- A person who promotes moderate stances and uses moderate speech;
- Local to the area, not just the region or the city, and speaks common people's language; and
- Non-politically aligned and not promoting the values of one particular party or another.

Another hyper-local element that helped improve communities' resilience to radicalisation is the **effective presence of security forces** clamping down on radical preachers, which helps reduce the spaces of recruitment. Among the most important points highlighted by focus group participants was **socio-economic deprivation** that contributed to the primary method of radicalisation, which was "not out of religious conviction, but desire of money."

**2. Radicalisation happens offline** and involves face-to-face recruiters making direct

contact. Participants underlined the importance of hyper-local interaction as "television and social media do not have a drastic influence on young people's minds. What impacts their thinking are their personal relationships with people they trust." This concept works both positively and negatively as participants explained that in the incidents of radicalisation they were aware of, recruiters always knew their targets.

**3.** Across the different focus groups there was a shared **lack of trust in news channels**. This mistrust is the result of the political ownership of each news channel as participants "understand what is happening; every TV station provides the news according to its particular interests and those of the politician who finances it." As a result participants take a snapshot of a variety of news channels in order to "find the truth." **Younger participants were more likely to trust social media**, in particular Facebook, as a means of measuring the truthfulness of news as "reality shows mostly on Facebook." The younger respondents would judge if a story had some truth depending on how many times it had been re-posted.

**4.** Another major finding was the use of social media to disseminate hyper-local news. A number of participants said they relied on **private WhatsApp and Facebook groups** to keep track of and receive update on developments in their local neighbourhoods. Information through these channels was considered trustworthy as the consumers and creators of the news updates were local.

**5.** Evident in all the focus groups was that the effectiveness of radical messages lay in the use of production and content: "radical messages have an intense propensity to incitement. But, regardless of their content, the style and tone of these messages are very attractive." The **potent**

**production value of radical messages** was more pronounced when compared to counter-radical messaging as the content is “more attractive than the messages preaching true religiosity, moderation and tolerance because the **style and tone of the moderate messages are highly boring** and monotonous.”

During the interactions with the radical and counter-radical messages a strikingly high number of participants, including those who oppose his views, pointed to Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah’s ability to communicate and create trust. He was described as “a real man who takes care of his people and who is respected even by his enemies because he is trustworthy and truthful.” This trust stems centrally from “his way of speaking, his charisma and appearance.”

**6.** Participants questioned the influence of radical and counter-radical messages by explaining that while radical messages may appear attractive, they are “convinced that the spread of *Daesh* does not rely on the dissemination of such radical messages” but on direct interaction and local factors. Similarly, despite the positive reaction to the content of counter-radical messages shown to the participants, they did not consider them to be effective to de-radicalise as “they do not impress people who are already influenced or convinced by radical messages.”

**7.** Across all the focus groups there was agreement that it was in the best interest to **reduce the number of messages produced by radical groups in the traditional media.** Reducing the number of messages shown will constrain the radical groups’ communication strategy: “If the media do not spread the radical messages, those messages will fade gradually.” However, in spite of the admittance that counter-radical messages in and of themselves were not enough to combat

radicalisation, participants agreed that it is important “to confront radical messages not by ignoring them, because ignoring them could be understood as agreeing with their content.”

**8.** For counter-radical messages to be effective they need to be much more frequently and consistently produced as “the counter messages are not produced on a rapid frequency as the messages of *Daesh* are, and therefore are not widely but occasionally spread.” In addition, counter-radical messages must **involve local, trust-worthy, moderate authorities.**

**9.** Participants felt that **Sunni Muslims are under pressure to defend themselves and their beliefs**, as Islam is “distorted by religious radicalism and is wrongly related nowadays to bloodshed and terrorism.” As a result of this pressure participants suggested that counter-messages should focus on two themes, one to undermine the religious precepts of radical messages and two, to draw a common theme of unity between all people in the face of terrorism in an attempt to **combat islamophobia**, perceived as a favourable environment for the growth of radical groups.



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# Background and Context

## 1. Current Trends

Over five years since the start of the Syrian civil war and Lebanon, despite the proximity to Syria, the presence of 1.5 million refugees and occasional outbursts of violence, has managed to avoid large-scale spill-over from the conflict. Yet, the current situation of uneasy peace faces a very real threat from the deeply rooted presence of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria. In addition to the violence wrought by the group against local civilians, foreign hostages and heritage sites, IS has used new communication strategies that previous iterations of radical groups did not display.

The cauldron of violence and chaos emanating from the Syrian conflict has created a fertile environment for the emergence and promulgation of radical movements who use the civil conflict in Syria to swell their ranks. IS has been by far the most successful of these groups, having attracted an estimated 27,000 to 31,000

foreign fighters<sup>(1)</sup> by developing potent ways of spreading their ideology. Experts have attributed the ability of IS to attract fighters from not only within the region but also from Europe and North America to the content of their messaging and the way it is crafted and delivered.<sup>(2)</sup>

IS's communication methods have included traditional media such as television and radio, but more importantly, have adopted social media to create new ways of speaking directly to their audience.<sup>(3)</sup> Using a multi-faceted and prolific media enterprise IS is able to create news stories and disseminate them with advanced audiovisual productions and propaganda material in a variety of forms, catering to global audiences.<sup>(4)</sup>

As a result of IS's public relations strategy, major intelligence, security and diplomatic services across the globe have struggled to counter IS's communication and develop effective counter-narratives.<sup>(5)</sup> Waging the battle over the narrative has resulted in government security services

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1. 'Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq', *The Soufan Group*, December 2015, p.4, available online at:

[http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG\\_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf](http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf), accessed on 31 March 2016.

2. Torok, Robyn, 'ISIS and the Institution of Online Terrorist Recruitment', *Middle East Institute*, January 2015, available online at: <http://web.mideasti.org/content/map/isis-and-institution-online-terrorist-recruitment?page=3>, accessed on 31 March 2016.

3. Berger, J.M., Morgan, Jonathon, 'The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and Describing the population of ISIS supporters on Twitter', *The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, Analysis Paper, No.20, March 2015, available online at [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/isis-twitter-census-berger-morgan/isis\\_twitter\\_census\\_berger\\_morgan.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/isis-twitter-census-berger-morgan/isis_twitter_census_berger_morgan.pdf), accessed on 1 May 2016.

4. Lesaca, Javier, 'On Social media, ISIS uses modern cultural images to spread anti-modern values', *TechTank*, 24 September 2015, available online at: <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/techtank/posts/2015/09/24-isis-social-media-engagement>, accessed on 31 March 2016.

5. Sabet-Parry, Rayyan, 'EU plans to step up fight on online jihadi propaganda' *cnsnews.com*, 29 January 2015, available online at: <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/eu-plans-step-fight-online-jihadi-propaganda>, accessed on 31 March 2016.

placing their focus on the sources of radical messaging and trying to respond to a number of questions:

- How do radical groups craft their messages?
- What makes messages by radical groups appealing?
- How to counter the content?
- Where are the messages carried and how to limit the echo chambers in which radical groups pronounce their messages?

The most championed of the solutions to IS's media campaign is to employ the 'return fire' policy by providing counter-radical messages that diminish the impact of the organisation's narratives. This response can be seen in the resources provided to help moderate groups develop counter-messages that oppose fundamentalist and violent interpretations of Islamic teachings. The results of these efforts have been met with limited success, as David Sorenson explains: the US State Department's success can be "measured even in social media; an ISIS jihadi got 32 "favorites" for his recruiting hashtag, at the same time, the State Department's posting got zero. Efforts to counter ISIS propaganda continue to fall short."<sup>6</sup> In spite of the considerable questions relating to the effectiveness of the 'return fire' policy, countering radical messages is still offered as potential solution to combat IS's media and communication campaign.<sup>7</sup> The policy prescription that recommends combating violent

extremist messages by providing a counter-narrative is based on the implicit assumption that the target audience receives and is influenced by the content of these communications.

However, to obtain the whole picture so comprehensive policy can be developed to combat radical messaging, it is vital that the views of the most important actor in the 'message food chain,' the end user, is collected and analysed. Without a thorough understanding of how citizens receive and perceive information and messages from and about radical groups, the well-intentioned and oft-championed 'return fire' counter-narrative initiatives will not be as effective as intended. Therefore, attempts to counter the messages spread by radical groups will fail, because they would not be using channels and vectors that reach the end recipient on the ground.

## 2. Aims

Understanding the dynamics that take place at the user-end of radicalisation and counter-radicalisation is crucial to understanding the recruitment and support puzzle, and better informing policy. This pilot study intends to provide a fuller understanding of the radicalisation process by testing how target audiences in Lebanon, and more specifically in Tripoli and Sunni villages in West Bekaa as well as Syrian refugees, interpret and respond to both radical messages and counter-radical messages, and by identifying policy-relevant conclusions.

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6. Sorenson, David, 'Priming Strategic Communications: Countering the Appeal of ISIS' *Parameters* 44, no. 3 2014: pp.25–36, p.26, available online at: [https://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/issues/Autumn\\_2014/6\\_SorensonDavid\\_Priming%20Strategic%20Communications%20Countering%20the%20Appeal%20of%20ISIS.pdf](https://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/issues/Autumn_2014/6_SorensonDavid_Priming%20Strategic%20Communications%20Countering%20the%20Appeal%20of%20ISIS.pdf), accessed on 20 April 2016.

7. Cohen, Jared, 'Digital Counterinsurgency How to Marginalize the Islamic State Online', *Foreign Policy*, Nov-Dec 2015, available online at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/digital-counterinsurgency>, accessed on 20 April 2016.

The findings of this report are based on data collected from a series of focus groups with participants identified as likely target audiences for radical messages.

The objectives of the focus groups were to:

- Identify the specific **channels** through which the end media consumers receive their information (word-of-mouth, leaflets, religious speeches and sermons, radio, TV, print publications, social networks, specific websites, etc.);
- Understand which **elements** of the content of the messages, such as language and symbols, make them more or less likely to influence recipients; and
- Identify which factors in a recipient's **environment** (education, social conditions, living standards, area of living, political beliefs, etc.) make individuals more or less receptive to different messages.

The central aim of this research is to provide policy recommendations that can aid the counter-radicalisation efforts through the following means:

- Provide policy-makers with an accurate assessment of the best methods to effectively communicate with at-risk groups;
- Guide funding strategies that focus on spreading counter-narratives; and
- Help develop alternative narratives that reflect local realities and media consumption patterns.



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# Countering Extremism: Research and Policy

This review will take a brief, but important, look at the scope of work in the counter-extremist world to contextualise the current state of the research and policy debate around countering violent extremism (CVE) through communication. By observing the corpus of research it is clear that there is a focus on the ‘content makers,’ dissecting their productions and inferring what makes them appealing.<sup>(8)</sup>

Crucially there is an inherent assumption from the current research that radical messages are an important factor in the radicalisation process, despite the dearth of evidence to support that view.<sup>(9)</sup> Government agencies, think-tanks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as a result now treat the idea that radical messaging leads to radicalisation as a *fait accompli*. This assumption leads to policy designed to combat messages by providing an alternative narrative, with the presumption that IS’s success in recruitment is driven by their social media popularity.<sup>(10)</sup>

Winning of ‘hearts and minds’ is not a new development. Historically counter-insurgent strategies employed in conflicts such as Northern Ireland and Iraq have acknowledged the importance of winning back the community to the state. In the post 9/11 era there has been a proliferation of governmental agencies designed to combat the methods of radical groups.<sup>(11)</sup> This approach is not without its critics. The United Kingdom’s for instance announced in 2015 a new Commonwealth Counter Extremism Unit. However, there have been problems, as illustrated by the significant criticism of the UK’s long-standing PREVENT strategy, described by the United Nations as a policy that has translated into “crude racial, ideological, cultural and religious profiling, with consequent effects on the right to freedom of association of some groups.”<sup>(12)</sup>

Further danger in governmental communication policies to prevent radicalisation is the assumption that the best method to limit the

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8. Winter, Charlie, ‘The Virtual ‘Caliphate’: Understanding Islamic State’s Propaganda Strategy’, *Quilliam Foundation*, July 2015, available online at: <https://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/the-virtual-caliphate-understanding-islamic-states-propaganda-strategy.pdf>, accessed on 15 March 2016.

9. Ferguson, Kate. “Countering violent extremism through media and communication strategies.” *Reflections* 27, 2016, p.28, available online at: <http://www.paccsresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Countering-Violent-Extremism-Through-Media-and-Communication-Strategies.pdf>, accessed on 15 March 2016.

10. Sorenson, ‘Priming Strategic Communications: Countering the Appeal of ISIS’, p.26.

11. To find a list of different governmental agencies that tackle radical messaging please see (for the United States) Thomas, Timothy L, ‘Countering Internet Extremism’, *Foreign Military Studies Office*, 2009, available online at: <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/countering-internet-extremism.pdf>, accessed on 15 March 2016, and (for the UK) Rogers, Peter. ‘Contesting and preventing terrorism: On the development of UK strategic policy on radicalisation and community resilience.’ *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 3.2, 2008, pp.38-61, available online at: <http://www.researchonline.mq.edu.au/vital/access/services/Download/mq:10995/DS01>, accessed on 15 March 2016.

12. United Nations Special Rapporteur, ‘Statement by The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association at the Conclusion of his Second Visit to the United Kingdom’, available online at <http://freemassembly.net/news/statement-united-kingdom-follow-up/>, accessed on 22 March 2016.



appeal of IS's narrative is to undermine the Islamic frameworks reinforced in their messages, for example:

*Expose the weaknesses and contradictions inherent in their use of Islamic values, for example their erratic use of the concepts of iman and ihsan. Target the point at which jihadi propaganda leans upon Islamic creedal values, in order to undermine the whole ideology.*<sup>(13)</sup>

The resultant policies to counter radical messaging take on a very particular approach focusing on Islam and Muslim communities, which can, through clumsy implementation, inflame existing issues and push communities into further isolation, as Paul Bell describes:

*The problem is being misdiagnosed, the remedies delivered mostly do more harm than good, and the net effect has been to steadily further polarize opinion and relations between Muslim immigrant minorities and non-Muslim majorities (...) We need to de-emphasize our 'Islamization' of the problem and take the pressure off Muslim communities.*<sup>(14)</sup>

Consequently, a major debate has been taking place, mainly in Europe and France

in particular, between the tenets of the 'radicalisation of Islam' as a source of the current violent extremism trend, and those of the 'Islamisation of radicalism.' Aleksandra Szykiewicz summarises the debate: "Is the form of terrorism we are facing today a consequence of Salafism [...] or is it rather the product of a "nihilist and generational revolt" of young people who are attracted by radicalism *per se*?"<sup>(15)</sup>

In the academic field there is ongoing research that seeks to understand the pull factors of IS's messaging as it relates to Islamic jurisprudence and has created useful frameworks to understand the correlation.<sup>(16)</sup> The research paper "Why ISIS' Message Resonates: Leveraging Islam, Socio-Political Catalysts and Adaptive Messaging" conducted by Ian Pelletier *et al* provides vital grounding for this pilot study to understand how IS shapes its messages to be most effective in recruitment. The research suggests counter-messaging policy options based on their tabulations: "An effective counter-message strategy must address both the message and the catalysts that allow for acceptance of a radical reinterpretation of Islamic Law."<sup>(17)</sup> However, this research has one substantial gap that could illuminate the findings

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13. El-Badawy, Emman, Comerford, Milo, Welby, Peter, 'Inside the Jihadi Mind: Understanding Ideology and Propaganda' *Centre on Religion and Geopolitics*, p6, available online at:

<http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/reports-analysis/report/inside-jihadi-mind>, accessed on 15 March 2016.

14. Bell, Paul, 'ISIS and violent extremism: Is the West's counter-narrative making the problem worse? Influence, *The Chartered Institute for Public Relations*, 25 June 2015, available online at:

<http://influence.cipr.co.uk/2015/06/25/isis-violent-extremism-wests-counter-narrative-making-problem-worse/>, accessed on 22 March 2016.

15. Szykiewicz, Aleksandra, 'The Grand French Debate – Radicalization of Islam or "Islamization of radicalism"?' Centre des études de sécurité (CES), *Institut Français des Relations Internationales*, 25 April 2016, available online at :

<http://ultimaratio-blog.org/fr/archives/7703>, accessed on 24 May 2016.

16. Pelletier, Ian R., et al. 'Why ISIS' Message Resonates: Leveraging Islam, Socio-Political Catalysts and Adaptive Messaging.' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2016, pp.1-66, available online at:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1139373>.

17. *Ibid*, p.40

further: testing the analysed radical messages among their target audience.

Testing messages among the target audience allows for a multi-layered analysis where we can empirically investigate the assumptions evident in the counter-radicalisation quest as to why the messages are appealing. The aim of this pilot study is to assemble the attitudes and interpretations of the target audience, which will then allow for a fuller policy debate.



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# Methodology

This research was conducted between December 2015 and March 2016 and consisted of a number of distinct and interrelated aspects that sought to draw together a comprehensive research strategy:

- **Summarising the current trends** in research on counter-extremism through communication, identifying areas of focus and importantly, areas of omission that require further investigation.
- **Assessing the current security situation in Lebanon**, especially how radical messaging and recruitment affects the day-to-day life of citizens and the security of the state.
- **Enlisting experts to a steering committee** to identify trends in radical messaging, recruit focus group participants, and facilitate focus groups.
- **Developing and testing a discussion guide** to be used in focus groups to collect valuable data.
- **Analysing the findings**, cross-referencing and triangulating the information to understand media consumption habits in the selected Lebanese communities as well as identifying the main drivers for joining radical groups or at least being attracted to their ideas.

## 1. Recruitment of Steering Committee

The project's lead researchers, Drew Mikhael and Ayman Mhanna, developed a list of candidates to form the steering committee, based on:

- In-depth knowledge of the media outputs of radical groups and counter-narrative initiatives; and

- Experience in running focus groups on media consumption habits.

After analysing the potential candidates, Marie-Thérèse Corbani and Nidal Ayoub were recruited. Ms Corbani has five years of experience monitoring, collecting and analysing extremist messages for different organisations. She mapped the current trends of radical messages stemming from the Iraqi and Syrian conflicts and provided a shortlist of Arabic and English versions of communications across different media types. Ms Corbani also provided several counter-radical messages across new and traditional media formats. Ms Ayoub has long years of experience as a TV journalist. She has been teaching journalism in several universities and has conducted focus groups and carried out research in media fields. Ms Ayoub was able to facilitate the focus groups involving women respondents, this avoided possible social stigma of talking to men, providing better quality data.

## 2. Recruitment of Focus Group Participants

The initial meeting of the steering committee highlighted an issue in the research practices in Lebanon that could not be ignored. The current state of focus group recruitment in Lebanon often results in professional focus group participants being used repeatedly for different topics.

As a result recruitment of the focus groups was carried out by utilising network of connexions of the steering committee and researchers, without resorting to the limited number of consultants who are usually hired to line up participants in qualitative research projects. Links were made with interlocutors that worked

in the communities in Tripoli and West Bekaa. The interlocutors were tasked with recruitment of participants that fit the demographic profile: young males in their 20s, young females in their 20s, male teenagers, male heads of households above 40, women mothers above 35.

In line with the central goals of the research, i.e. to test the views of those from the most ‘at-risk’ communities, it was decided that focus group participants from Tripoli would be from Bab al-Tabbaneh. This neighbourhood has experienced several incidents of violent conflict drawn along sectarian lines and as a result of the previous rounds of fighting, security presence and operations have significantly increased. This meant that participants would be able to comment on the potential effectiveness of the policies of the Lebanese security institutions, adding another layer to the analysis. Tripoli participants had, with the exception of one woman holding a university degree, primary or secondary education level.

The recruitment of participants from West Bekaa centred on the towns of Jib Jennin and Khirbet Qanafar. These two towns are close to the Lebanese-Syrian border and to Shia-majority villages. In addition there was a special emphasis on trying to recruit families to take part in the different focus groups. We were able to recruit 24 persons from seven families, with both fathers and mothers, sons and daughters contributing in the different groups. This allowed us to cross-reference intra-family answers with a particular focus on any potential knowledge gaps between parents and children, and explains why the demographic of males in their 30s was not included in this research. Adult West Bekaa participants had secondary or university education level.

The recruitment of Syrian refugees provided several key challenges. The first was the

unwillingness of Syrian refugees to travel outside of their region in fear of being arrested without proper documentation. The second issue is the ‘focus group fatigue’ experienced by the Syrian refugee population. With numerous and continuing studies focusing on Syrians, refugees are becoming less willing to take part in focus groups in which they see no benefit. Despite the difficulties we were able to obtain 20 respondents, 10 male and 10 female.

There is ‘focus group fatigue’ experienced by the Syrian refugee population. With numerous and continuing studies focusing on Syrians, refugees are becoming less willing to take part in research in which they see no benefit.

### 3. *Development of Discussion Guide*

The discussion guide (Appendix 1) was developed using principles of interpretive qualitative design. As a result the onus with the questions was not to usher the respondents into answers but to allow enough space for their own values and interpretations. The areas we were examining were covered with a set of baseline questions that would be asked for each of the messages shown. However, a series of prompts were added to facilitate a fleshing out of the subject matter. This meant the respondents’ attitudes to the messages as well as their own analysis of the wider issue of radical recruitment and counter-narratives could come to the fore. The selection of messages themselves was drawn from a shortlist (Appendix 2) provided by Ms Corbani and were chosen to cover a range of different media: radio, online video, social

media posts, newspaper articles and television advertisements. The discussion guide was then tested and adjusted for clarity before the first focus group.

### **4. Ethics**

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic it was of the utmost importance that careful consideration was paid to the ethical concerns of the research. To ensure ethical research practices we informed all participants of the nature of the research without deception, reassuring that any means of identifying them, name, school (when applicable), regional location would not be included in the study for any purposes other than to map who participated. All quotations have been anonymised.



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# Findings

The findings will be broken down into the responses based on the key topics that the discussion guide sought to answer:

1. Media consumption habits;
2. Reactions to and interpretations of radical messages; and
3. Reactions to and interpretations of counter-radical messages.

Within each section significant variables – if any – based on the differences between age groups, regions and citizenship status will be noted.

## 1. Media Consumption Habits

Each focus group started with a set of baseline questions that examined the respondents' media consumption habits as well as their levels of trust in news programmes. These questions provided us with a sense of the engagement with news programmes, level of media literacy and an understanding of what issues the participants found important to them.

What was striking was the uniformity of opinion on the lack of credibility of the local news channels. All groups, regardless of age and location expressed deep-seated scepticism of news due to the political biases in each. As one woman in West Bekaa put it:

*“All media bet on sectarian sensibilities: people blindly following their za'im [political leader], are deeply affected by and act upon such misleading and manipulative information (...) the media flouts public opinion on the grounds that the public believes and approves everything without relying on any kind of critical thinking.”*

The participants expressed the view that the news programmes were designed to promote the narrative of certain political parties and therefore lack credibility. As a result respondents had to gather snapshots of the news from different sources, as one male in West Bekaa stated, he had to compare the different channels due to the “contradictions and exaggerations” in each.

There was an understanding from the participants of the factors that shape news programming; as one woman in West Bekaa said: “editorial policies shape the news according to subjective criteria and political calculation. TV news bulletins provide the public with a ready-made product while information on the Internet stays in the process of being made.” In each focus group it was clear that the respondents were doubtful of the accuracy of the information presented and sought to circumnavigate biases by watching a collection of different media outlets “to know the truth” as a woman from West Bekaa put it. New TV was more often cited as the channel people watch to follow breaking news. Otherwise, people would tend to watch LBCI, MTV or Al-Manar, according to their own political leanings, while being aware of each channel's bias.

Several of the younger participants downloaded phone applications that help gather news from different sources to avoid reliance on one channel. Another (older) respondent in Tripoli uses an application that is voice-commanded and searches for videos he requests from YouTube avoiding the issue of illiteracy.

Yet, not all media programmes were considered untrustworthy as several members of different focus groups stated that they believed live coverage of events and that political talk shows



are more truthful. Marcel Ghanem's show "Kalam el-Nass" was often named as a credible political programme on TV.

Younger participants follow closed, private Facebook and WhatsApp groups that relay news about developments at the very local level, in their neighbourhoods.

Younger participants were more likely to trust social media websites as sources of information. Use of social media for information was in direct contrast to the older demographics who characterised Facebook as "exaggerated" or that information on the Internet was "more dangerous than television." Younger participants would use Facebook as a barometer to gauge the truthfulness of news; if more people posted information or discussed a story then it was more likely to be true. Younger respondents stated that Facebook is a tool for them to uncover the truths of situations as "reality shows mostly on Facebook" and "TV stations hide facts while Facebook exposes them." An interesting use of the social media, in particular WhatsApp and Facebook, was the younger participants' tendency to share news and information about their own neighbourhood. Those members who were part of closed Facebook or WhatsApp groups were able to post and share information about their own communities. As a result these channels of information were highly trusted by members of the groups.

There was also an awareness across different age groups about the impact of their social media interaction; most respondents believing that posting, liking or sharing information on Facebook could lead to "frictions with people in their surroundings." Young people were careful

with what they posted and shared due to parental oversight. There was also an understanding across the different respondents that, while they encountered radical messages, they were hesitant to share them because "if the media do not spread the radical messages, those messages will fade gradually and therefore there is no need to confront them with counter-messages."

The only significant variables from the other groups is that Syrian refugees watch more international and regional stations such as Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera. Unsurprisingly their focus was Syrian affairs, what was happening in the Syrian conflict as well as looking up the procedures needed as refugees. They, like their Lebanese counterparts, watched and compared a number of different channels for added verification of their news. The Syrian men were also, like some of their Lebanese counterparts, using Facebook and WhatsApp to be updated with news in their home villages; this is the news of primary concern and without these two social networks they would not be able to stay up to date on events.

Syrian refugees in Lebanon watch more international and regional stations such as Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera, rather than Lebanese channels.

## 2. Reactions to and Interpretations of Radical Messages

This section will highlight the respondents' interpretations of the radical messages and the issues around the potential of such messages attracting people to join or support extremist groups. The participants, as well as detailing

their views on radical messages, also discussed a number of issues around radicalisation. The questions allowed enough room for the respondents to highlight the issues that were most salient to them. Therefore the findings in this section have been broken down thematically according to the concepts raised by the participants themselves.

### 2.1: Vilification of Islam

While it was not the intention of this study to test the Quran to judge if the key concepts in Islam lead to violence, the participants felt under pressure to defend Islam, acknowledging the damaging impact of actions of radical groups as a woman from West Bekaa stated after viewing an IS message:

*“Such a message distorts the image of Islam and has a propensity to incitement. Radical factions do not relate to Islam; their members are not normal human beings; they do not represent Muslims and they deceive lesser minded people. Islam calls neither for violence nor for classifying, categorising or rating people.”*

There is a strong sense of marginalisation. Participants are personally suffering from pairing Islam and terrorism. They acknowledged the damaging impact of actions of radical groups.

Throughout the focus groups the participants discussed the sense of marginalisation as they are “personally suffering from pairing Islam and terrorism, even feeling harm.” This harm was most notable in the number of respondents who felt that Islam was distorted and hijacked by IS, disagreeing on the religious doctrine forwarded in the radical messages as outright “lies and misrepresentation of the core texts.” This is

most noticeable when several respondents remarked on the concept of Jihad: “Jihad is a concept exploited by *Daesh*. Jihad does not lead to perform suicidal operations. Islam is tolerant, not harmful nor hateful. *Daesh* is distorting the image of Islam.”

Respondents were familiar with the style and tone of radical messages shown to them but were unsure about where they had first come across them.

Respondents were familiar with the style and tone of some of the radical messages shown to them. Participants were however unsure about where they had first come across such “terrifying messages.” Participants across the focus groups claimed to see similar messages on AlJazeera, Al Arabiya and on social media (particularly spread through WhatsApp) without being entirely sure. They also mentioned that “they came across violent images and radical messages on Facebook but they do not search for them or share them.” Twitter, conversely, was never mentioned in the communities where we conducted research.

Some younger participants admitted though they sometimes search for violent and graphic videos. However, they are more interested in the violence itself than the underlying ideology; they would watch graphic videos whether posted by radical groups or any other source. What is clear is that there is significant information traffic that makes it hard for our participants to avoid radical messages, whether they wanted to, as they said, or not.

Nearly all the participants found the radical messages distressing, particularly when it showed Islamic traditions and faith in an

unrecognisable light, as one male from Tripoli said he cried when recalling one radical video he found some month prior; he stated: “It is *haram* to act like this. What kind of a Sheikh is this? What is his religion? Radicals distorts the image of Islam; a true Muslim is tolerant and helpful.” He was referring to a video of a severed head being used as a football under the supervision and guidance of a Sheikh whom he could not identify.

The vilification of Muslims would contribute to pushing younger people to join radical groups.

It was obvious that the respondents were aware of the reasons why radical groups adopted an Islamic framework to justify their actions, as it is “the quickest way to promote a political idea, especially among ignorant and uneducated people.” It was also pointed out by the respondents that the vilification of Muslims would help contribute to pushing “younger people to join radical groups and to perform terrorist acts.” In West Bekaa this point was reaffirmed as participants also noticed a trend between marginalisation and young people joining radical groups: “Muslims, especially the Sunni, are wrongly seen as terrorists. Such a generalised attitude is pushing youngsters to join radical groups and to perform terrorist acts.”

“Young boys are easily tempted by carrying guns and getting a monthly salary.” Social status and desire for money are the major drivers behind joining radical groups.

## 2.2: How Recruitment Happens

Respondents, while decoupling Islam from terrorism pointed to several other factors that lead to radicalisation, both mechanistic and conceptual. Two of the foremost observations made in the focus groups were socio-economic hardship, coupled with the increase in social status that occurs when carrying a gun. These factors make it easier for recruitment to take place. “Young boys are easily tempted by carrying guns and getting a monthly salary. Poor people have nothing to lose.” Several participants explained that IS is offering money to potential recruits as one of the primarily methods of recruitment and that, “not out of religious conviction, but their desire of money” was the primary driver behind recruitment. The economic factor was more strongly voiced in Tripoli while in West Bekaa training on gun use was the first driver that was mentioned.

One significant variable that appeared during the focus groups was in Tripoli, where the respondents indicated that the neighbourhood in which they lived (Bab al-Tabbaneh) experienced an upsurge in “radical” Sheikhs delivering sermons at the start of the Syrian civil war. Participants explained that during the early period of the Syrian war, when sectarian tensions were high in Bab al-Tabbaneh, several young people were “encouraged by the vehement sermons delivered in the mosques against the Syrian regime.”

The view that radical and influential preachers could entice younger people was not only evident in Tripoli as the focus groups in West Bekaa also indicated a strong presence of radical preachers. Participants in Tripoli were aware that certain preachers would be politicised to the point that they would avoid praying in their mosques because: “every mosque is owned by a faction and the ones praying in a particular

mosque are automatically seen as members of this faction.” By avoiding these mosques the participants avoided radical sermons and scenarios where persuasion could occur.

Nearly all participants knew of persons that had been recruited to join radical groups. In the examples where they had first-hand information, participants explained that initial contact was made on a one-to-one, face-to-face basis by a recruiter; this process did not involve traditional media or social media interaction, nor was religious discussion a part of that initial recruitment move. In one focus group in West Bekaa many of the participants admitted they had been approached to be recruited in person by someone they knew. This is described by the participants as a typical process for recruiters.

Nearly all participants knew of persons that had been recruited. Initial contact was made one-to-one, face-to-face and did not involve traditional or social media, nor was religious discussion a part of the initial recruitment move.

### **2.3: Does Radical Messaging Have an Impact?**

All participants could recall multiple encounters with radical messages, through traditional media outlets and social media. There was a broad consensus among the focus groups that the radical messages would not be enough to radicalise in and of themselves. However, there was also a consensus that radical messages, due to the production techniques were inherently exciting and “regardless of their content, the style and tone of these messages are very attractive.”

Regardless of their content, the style and tone of radical messages are very attractive. However, radical messages alone are not enough to radicalise.

The attractiveness of the messages came down to simple matters of quality of production as proven by young men in West Bekaa who stated that they often sing hymns and songs made by IS because “they like the voice of the singer.” But if the voice of the singer was ugly, they would not have memorised them or listened to them. The reality is that the attractiveness of radical messages lies much more in the delivery than the content, which was firmly and by all participants rebuked on every point.

Young people often sing IS's hymns because they like the voice of the singer. If his voice was ugly, they would not have memorised them. The attractiveness of radical messages lies much more in the delivery than the content.

To further buttress this point, several participants across different ages, regions and genders highlighted Hassan Nasrallah as a person who could be considered trustworthy, not because of the content of his speeches but because they were “impressed by his way of speaking, his charisma and appearance.” Throughout the different focus groups Hassan Nasrallah was evoked as antithesis of the current Sunni national and political figures, who are seen as corrupt, absent and self-interested. As a result of the negative perception of the major national Sunni figures, they are not positioned to influence their constituents. It was

striking that although Nasrallah's policies and positions clashed with that of the majority of participants in our focus groups, the respondents still came to the conclusion that: "we need a Sunni Hassan Nasrallah."

While there was consensus from the participants that messaging does not radicalise, the media output of radical groups helps create an atmosphere in which their beliefs are promoted. This can in turn help to "brainwash" impressionable minds when paired with deep socio-economic and marginalisation issues. As a result it was clear that all the participants felt that it was important to counter radical messages to challenge the narratives and undermine the falsehood created by groups.

While messaging does not radicalise, it is still important to counter radical messages to challenge the narratives and undermine the falsehood created by extremist groups to prevent brainwashing of impressionable minds deep socio-economic marginalisation.

### 3. Reactions to and Interpretations of Counter-Radical Messages

This section will situate the responses to the counter-radical messages displayed during the focus groups. In a similar vein to the responses to the radical messages, the participants would then detail issues around countering radicalisation and the effective ways and means that they have observed. Most participants had seen some form of counter-radical messages on mainstream television channels and social media. However, participants noted that coming across counter-radical messages was rare (especially in

comparison to radical messages) and often not through the original medium. A number of focus group participants of different ages, genders and locations detailed that they would come into contact with counter-messages 'offline' as one participant remembered spray painted on a wall in a local neighbourhood or posters stuck on walls after the August 2013 bombings in Tripoli.

Participants agreed with the content of counter-radical messages but not the manner in which they were delivered. They are too long and lack emotion.

#### 3.1: Do Counter-Radical Messages Impact Positively?

In an almost mirror image of the reactions to the radical messages, the participants agreed with the content of the counter-messages but not the manner in which they were delivered. The forceful and colourful language of the radical messages is not matched in the counter-messages, as one participant in West Bekaa explains: tweets (from counter-radical centre 'Sawab') need "stronger words and tougher expressions to draw attention."

Furthermore it is also important that the counter-message is framed in accessible language. In the case of the discussion of Al Azhar's statements the participants agreed with the content but "compared to radical messages, it is too long, lacks emotion, impact and efficiency, while the messages of *Daesh* go straight to the point, arouse emotions, are short, and therefore are more attractive." Another key point in the effectiveness of counter-messages is linked to who is producing the messages as several participants expressed that Al Azhar "as a Muslim authority means nothing to us," despite agreeing with the message.

What appeared vitally important is the source of the counter-message having the necessary social capital with the audience at hand.

What is vitally important is the source of the counter-message having the necessary social capital with the audience at hand. Al Azhar does not mean much among marginalised local communities.

The **content** of the message, its **production value**, the **frequency** in which it appears and the identity and consistency of the **creator** of the message are the four key factors to the most effective counter-messaging strategy. Participants stated that counter-messages must be spread in large quantities and aired frequently on TV stations to reach older people and on social media to touch younger demographics as well.

Four key factors for effective counter-messaging: content of the message, production value, frequency of dissemination and identity of the creator. But counter-messaging will still have limited value with already radicalised individuals.

Even if a counter-radical message manages to adhere to the four key indicators, participants were still unsure that there would be any discernible effect on preventing radicalisation as most people have “specific political and ideological affiliations and therefore consider that the group they belong to is the ultimate representation of everything

right.” As a result any counter-message is likely to have a limited chance of success and only work on those who have not fully radicalised or already reject the claims and actions of radical groups.

In light of the fact that counter-messaging may only have a limited effectiveness, participants believed that it was still a vitally important policy to develop to fire back against radical messages. However, an interesting debate emerged from the focus groups in regards to what should be the content of the counter-messages, where there was a split around the issue of decoupling Islam from the counter-messages. Some said: “any counter message must not be addressed only to Muslims and must use a non-religious terminology,” whereas a significant number of focus group attendees argued that “the kind of messages able to counterbalance and wipe out radical ones is a comprehensive religious message defining the true meaning of Islam and delivered by pious and trustworthy Sheikhs addressing the people in a very clear language.” It seems clear that a combination of both should be the policy ideal. It is vitally important to untangle Islam from terrorism as a number of our participants remarked in different focus groups: “Islam is distorted by religious radicalism and is wrongly related nowadays to bloodshed and terrorism.” Simultaneously it is important to explain to non-Muslims that radical groups who use the framework of Islam are distorting the religious doctrine to debunk myths related to Islam and combat growing hate speech directed at Muslims.<sup>(18)</sup>

Equally important is to combat growing hate speech directed at Muslims.

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18. Bell, ‘ISIS and violent extremism’.

Finally, one important point that had large consensus across the focus groups was that the media should try to limit or prohibit the airing of radical messages as a way of levelling the playing field between radical and counter-radical messaging:

*“The media must stop disseminating such harmful messages because by disseminating radical messages, discussing them and analysing them, they are involuntarily promoting Daesh and expanding the scope of its impact on people, while the counter-messages are not produced on a rapid frequency as the messages of Daesh are, and therefore are not widely but occasionally spread. Plus the fact that Daesh is constantly taking dramatic actions and the producers of the counter-messages are not and cannot do so.”*

### 3.2: How Recruitment Is Stopped

Throughout the focus groups the participants would explain the ways in which radicalisation has been avoided. Participants highlighted that ‘heads’ of neighbourhoods (كبير الحارة) are uniquely placed to be the first responders in countering radicalisation. The profile of this person, (which is based on first-hand participant experiences) is as follows:

- A credible, non-corrupt person who does not use his position to ‘swindle’ or make a profit;
- A person who promotes moderate stances and uses moderate speech;
- Local to the area, not just the region or the city, and speaks common people’s language; and

Similarly to recruitment happening on a day-to-day, one-to-one and face-to-face basis, effective prevention of recruitment must use the same channels, through people who enjoy “credibility and dignity.”

- Non-politically aligned and not promoting the values of one particular party or another.

The most important factor was that the person must be local and enjoy “credibility and dignity.” It was clear from the focus groups that there was a significant amount of distrust over people who “traded over their religion,” to the point that a Sheikh would be completely discredited if he was seen to be turning a profit or “driving a Range Rover overnight” as many Tripoli participants put it, regardless of the source of the Sheikh’s sudden enrichment. Participants explained that the trusted person would be the first port of call if there was a religious issue that needed clarification.

Key factors that help combat radicalisation are hyper-local. Counter-radicalisation efforts are only effective if they are deployed intra-community by trusted notable persons. “Local is authentic.”

There were also key points detailed by the participants that helped combat recruitment by radical groups at the very local level:

Local political parties in West Bekaa such as former MP Abdul-Rahim Mrad’s Union Party (*Hizb al-Ittihad*) and Hezbollah-affiliated, mostly Sunni, *Saraya Al-Muqawama* (Resistance Brigades) are trying to recruit – often successfully – young men in West Bekaa to stop them from joining radical Sunni groups in Syria. These groups have recognised the socio-economic and psychological conditions that have led to increased recruitment by radical groups and have sought to address this by offering young men the chance to be trained in weapons and earn money. Being affiliated with

an organisation linked to Hezbollah would also provide the member with a sense of immunity and a guarantee that he will not be “bothered” by the Army or the police.

The Lebanese Army Intelligence has been working on the ground in Tripoli to ‘silence’ any preachers who engage in radical speech acts. Most of the respondents wished to see these actions continue by the Army but were wary of potential abuses of civil rights.

In sum the key factors that help combat radicalisation are intrinsically hyper-local. Radicalisation does not happen without the face-to-face connexions through acquaintances on a day-to-day basis. Similarly counter-radicalisation efforts are only effective if they are deployed intra-community by trusted and forward facing notable persons. Radical and counter-radical messages, carried through the echo chambers of new and old media help create validation vectors but they are not, in and of themselves, enough to radical or de-radicalise. As such, the key observations from this research is that ‘local is authentic’ and contact on a day-to-day, face-to-face basis by known persons is more likely to evoke change, both positive and negative.

Radical and counter-radical messages on new and old media help create validation, but they are not enough to radicalise or de-radicalise.

For policy-makers it will be crucial to narrow the focus on the hyper-local level and identify the specific factors that have so far led Lebanon to show remarkable resistance to radicalisation. Considering the history of sectarian tension and civil war this is no small feat and the actions taken and detailed to us by our participants

on the community level can form the basis for policy.

This pilot study has managed to provide glimpses into the communication mechanisms that have so far kept the number of Lebanon’s radicalised lower than any other country in the region and in many Western European countries as well, including the UK, France and Belgium. This study has also highlighted where there are areas for improvement if Lebanon is to maintain the state of relative insulation from the Syrian conflict.





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## Scope for Further Study

It is important to note that the scope of this pilot study was limited. We were able to conduct nine focus groups with the following demographics:

- Syrian males aged between 30 to 40;
- Syrian females aged between 20 to 30;
- Lebanese male heads of households in Tripoli aged between 40 and 50;
- Lebanese females in Tripoli aged between 25 and 60;
- Young Lebanese males in Tripoli aged between 20 and 30;
- Lebanese male heads of households in West Bekaa aged between 35 and 50;
- Lebanese female mothers in West Bekaa aged between 35 and 50; and
- Young Lebanese male teenagers in West Bekaa aged between 15 and 20

Initially we planned to have 14 focus groups but encountered a number of difficulties. In regards to Syrian refugees we had difficulty gathering participants for two reasons: first was that Syrians were afraid to travel due to lack of proper identification papers, making them liable for arrest if caught. The second issue is that due to Syrian refugees being subject to numerous research projects the demographic is suffering from ‘focus group fatigue.’ We also did not secure focus groups for male teenagers in Tripoli. This is in small part due to the sensitivity of the research, which made it difficult for our interlocutors to gather the needed participants.

However, these issues did not endanger the quality of the research or the findings as we were able to gather enough respondents from each demographic category to ensure sufficient representation and triangulation. Due to the fact that the research was to gather qualitative data that sought to understand the surrounding

concepts of radical and counter-radical messaging it was not required to obtain larger quantities of respondents. What was important is that the research provided a snapshot of the issues, thoughts and attitudes towards radical and counter-radical messaging, which was achieved.

Our research in Lebanon highlighted the importance of hyper-local factors in the radicalisation process and preventive measures; dynamics in Tripoli are not the same as in West Bekaa, a mere 150 kilometres away. Therefore, a careful examination of local factors in other regions of the country, including in Palestinian refugee camps, is highly important.

The most significant element of this study that requires follow-up is that the phenomenon under examination is not only occurring in Lebanon. While it is perfectly appropriate to draw conclusions from the data provided here in regards to the Lebanese experience of dealing with radical and counter-radical messaging, extending the findings to other states in the region is essential, especially given the crucial importance of hyper-local factors.

The exceptional nature of the Lebanese case study and its successful resistance to radicalisation of citizens mean that it should be a perfect control case to compare with other states in the region. The findings contained in this pilot study should be set against regional states that have significantly higher numbers of citizens fighting in Syria. This would allow for deepening the understanding of the influence of radical messaging and how to combat it.

In particular, case studies such as Tunisia or Jordan would provide further data that point to

the potential indicators of successful recruitment through radical messaging. Both Jordan and Tunisia share significant variables with Lebanon. Jordan, like Lebanon is also a border-state with Syria and has a refugee population that is putting significant financial and political stress on the country. Tunisia has, along with Lebanon, one of the most competitive political processes in the Middle East and North Africa and has as a result a number of ideologically different groups in the polity. The evidence collected from either state, in conjunction with the data collected from Lebanon would provide invaluable insights that illuminate the successes and failures in countering radical messaging and recruitment broadly, which will in turn lead to the development of more impactful policy.

Considering the primary focus of the pilot study was to collect data from an overlooked demographic to put their views in the heart of policy-making, it is important to recognise the reaction to conducting these focus groups was overwhelmingly positive. One participant in Tripoli said that “one of the key ways to combat radicalisation was to organise discussion sessions similar to the one we took part in during this study, as these types of discussions can attract and convince hesitant minds because you care about them and listened to what they had to say.”

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## Recommendations

Combating radicalisation is a societal issue that requires a range of policy prescriptions. No one policy can hope to provide an encompassing answer to this issue. There were several useful and important concepts to be derived from this research:

**1. Empower local notables** or leaders to have a deeper reach in their communities. Identifying suitable civic and religious leaders should be based on their status in the communities as **not politically compromised, local to the area and carrying out work on a day-to-day basis**. Most importantly the person must not be seen as profiting from any position they have, as any **perception of corruption destroys the trust** between the local leader and constituents. **Promoting local good governance programmes** with local leaders in the driving seat can help create stronger bonds of trust between community organisers and the people they can influence. The profile of these leaders must be based on previously existing and long-standing ties to the communities where they are working, as **outside parties will naturally be distrusted**.

After identifying the correct persons that should be involved in programmes to engage with at-risk young people, it is essential to ensure that **young people have ownership** of and are actively engaged in the wellbeing of their communities as the only way to **curb the perception of marginalisation**. Local community leaders will be best placed to assess the needs of their community and should be supported in fundraising to be able to carry out the needed outreach work.

It is vital that **any development work undertaken in communities is done so on the basis of development only**. If a

**development project is in fact a disguised CVE programme the community will view it negatively**. The community will then feel singled out as ‘dangerous’ and different from other groups in the country. This would backlash especially in a diverse place like Lebanon and will likely do more harm than good by undermining positive initiatives, making any other following projects be viewed with suspicion. In plain, **do not CVE-brand existing local development, cultural, reconciliation, poverty alleviation and dialogue initiatives** that have started before the rise of the IS menace.

**2. Encourage the deconstruction of radical groups’ key religious concepts and ideals in the media and in the public sphere**. This should be done to promote open debate across the whole of society, including the most disempowered, to debunk myths about Sunni Islam and limit marginalisation of communities. The format should include **televised talk shows** as well as **‘real life’ public debates and interactive discussions** regularly and especially after significant news events involving radical groups. Vital to the success of this engagement is **picking the correct contributors who need to be respected local, civic, and religious figures**. Any dialogue that occurs during these events must employ as **plain language** as possible so that it is appealing to the widest audience.

**Consistency of media coverage** is essential. Media outlets must develop a comprehensive strategy to address radical messaging, marginalised communities, social, political and religious issues, and mitigate perception of bias.

**3. To be widely read, counter-radical messages must appear on local, closed WhatsApp and Facebook groups**, the two

largest mediums for reaching the necessary audience, **rather than on large-scale groups** that do not specifically target at-risk communities at the local level. When putting together counter-radical messages and campaigns it is important to use the following guidelines:

- Use impactful, hard-hitting visuals and plain language so the messages will be remembered and understood by all audiences;
- Send the messages through trusted local inhabitants of the neighbourhoods; and
- Include in the messages references to people's local reality in terms they understand.

Additional factors to be mindful of when creating alternative content is to **use symbols of unity and equality so that differences between Islam and others faiths is reduced**. This contributes to undermining myths about Islam and ties different communities together. Supplementary to the above is to utilise the defectors from radical groups by interviewing them to describe the realities and follies of radicalisation.

**4. Tackle socio-economic deprivation** in the poorest and most at-risk communities in Lebanon. Areas like Bab al-Tabbaneh should be targeted for significant economic development initiatives. Without jobs, or hope for jobs in the future, young people are more likely to be attracted to groups that will pay for their services. There is a precedent for young people being paid to fight for armed groups in Lebanon as numerous militias paid money for fighters during the civil war. This is a fundamental issue that needs to be meaningfully addressed; if it is not, **the appeal of money for service will entice young people to fight**

**out of desperation rather than conviction, regardless of any online or media-based counter-radicalisation strategies.**

**5. Strengthen national and local good governance and anti-corruption initiatives.**

Leaders perceived to be corrupt might be re-elected by at-risk communities out of the need for services and other benefits that are distributed during election seasons. However, one should not mistake the act of voting for a sign of trust and respect. Corrupt leaders lose the moral compass needed to influence audiences and shield them from the allure of radical groups.

**6. Build partnerships between at-risk communities and the Lebanese security forces.**

Rather than seeing areas such as Bab al-Tabbaneh as military or 'hard' policing cases, efforts should be made to work alongside members of the community. Primarily this means adopting a policing approach with the community **utilising the model of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)**.<sup>(19)</sup> PCSPs are local policing boards made up of:

- Municipal officials;
- Concerned members of the community that are a mixture of local people from the different religious, civic and business sectors that make up the community; and
- Local security personal.

The PCSPs are designed to allow security and local communities to consult one another on issues of concern. The board can identify and prioritise key issues and work across sectors to tackle them.

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19. Policing and Community Safety Partnerships are utilised in Northern Ireland to regulate conflict and tensions between rival communities. More details are available at: <http://www.pcsp.org/>

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# Appendix 1: Discussion Guide

## Running Timetable:

Run Time	Topic
00'00 – 04'59	Introduction
05'00 – 14'59	Baseline questions
15'00 – 34'59	Perception of package 1
35'00 – 54'59	Perception of package 2
55'00 – 1:14'59	Perception of package 3
1:15'00 – 1:30'00	Conclusion

## Materials needed:

Concept	Description
Radical messages	Hard copy images – audio tracks – video tracks – hard copy pamphlets
Counter-radical messages	Hard copy images – audio tracks – video tracks – hard copy pamphlets

## Check list and set-up reminders:

- Set up computer prior to group arrival;
- Ensure hard copies of materials are plentiful and brought along;
- Ensure all audio-visual materials are ready to play in sequence during focus groups;
- Ensure demographic checklist hard copies are brought; and;
- Refreshments on hand.

## PART 1: Introduction

1. Welcome, introduce the facilitator and note-taker, ensure sign-in sheet with demographic questions is passed around.
2. Who we are and what we are trying to do.
3. What will be done with the information.
4. Why we asked you to participate.
5. The format of the focus group, what we are covering and how long it will take.

## **PART 2: Baseline questions**

1. Where do you receive most of your news?
2. What other sources of news do you use?
3. Do you trust the news you see and hear?
4. What are the main reasons you use the internet?
5. What type of coverage are you likely to watch? Why?
6. What type of coverage are you less likely to watch? Why?

### *Probes for Discussion*

- Particular TV stations or programmes they watch?
- Particular radio stations or programmes they listen to?
- Do they share certain types of information on the internet?
- What kind of apps or websites are most popular?
- Do they get involved in any discussions online?
- Any viral campaigns they remember?
- Any hashtags?

## **PART 3: Perception of package 1**

**1. (RM5) HARD COPY – Al Baghdadi’s speech:** <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/islamic-state-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-encourages-emigration-worldwide-action.html>

**2. (CT10) VISUAL SLIDE SHOW – Several images from ‘say no to terror’ campaign shown:** [https://www.facebook.com/saynototerror/photos\\_stream#](https://www.facebook.com/saynototerror/photos_stream#)

**3. (RM9) AUDIO (Sections read aloud):** <http://stepagency-sy.net/archives/36071>

**4. (CT2) HARD COPY – Al Azhar Statement:** <https://arabic.rt.com/news/766969-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85->

- Have you encountered these messages? Have you seen any messages with the same argument? If so where?
- Do you know who made these? If yes, how?
- Do you think the statements given in these messages are truthful? Accurate?

**Behavioural analysis - When considering each one of the messages shown, read or heard, would you tend to strongly agree or disagree with the following:**

1. I identify with what is said and shown.
2. These messages are convincing in their argument.
3. I want to find more messages like these.
4. I would talk to a friend about these messages.
5. I would be worried about talking to people about these messages.

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**Interpretative analysis:**

1. How do these messages make you feel? Why?
2. What words and symbols can you identify in these messages? What do they mean to you?
3. Would these messages change the way you behave after seeing this message. If so how?

**Probes:**

- What particular aspects of these messages are most appealing?
- What particular aspects of these messages are unappealing?

**PART 4: Perception of package 2****1. (CT7) AUDIO (Sections read aloud) – Muslims being the first victims of terrorism:**

<http://www.albayan.ac/one-world/arabs/2014-08-19-1.2185389>

**2. (CT13) AUDIO-VISUAL – ‘Say no to terror’ YouTube video:**

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=2NpEXoCjsKE&feature=youtu.be>

**3. (RM2) AUDIO (read aloud) – Anti-Shia speech: <http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=178565>**

- Have you encountered these messages? Have you seen any messages with the same argument? If so where?
- Do you know who made these? If yes, how?
- Do you think the statements given in these messages are truthful? Accurate?

**Behavioural analysis - When considering each one of the messages shown, read or heard, would you tend to strongly agree or disagree with the following:**

1. I identify with what is said and shown.
2. These messages are convincing in their argument.
3. I want to find more messages like these.
4. I would talk to a friend about these messages.
5. I would be worried about talking to people about these messages.

**Interpretative analysis:**

1. How do these messages make you feel? Why?
2. What words and symbols can you identify in these messages? What do they mean to you?
3. Would these messages change the way you behave after seeing this message. If so how?

**Probes:**

- What particular aspects of these messages are most appealing?
- What particular aspects of these messages are unappealing?



**PART 5:** Perception of package 3

**1. (CT14) HARD COPY - Screenshot from Sawab Center:**

<https://twitter.com/sawabcenter/status/692724012934381568>

**2. (RM10) HARD COPY - Statement on international coalition's bombing campaign:**

<http://stepagency-sy.net/archives/36072>

**3: (CT8) AUDIO-VISUAL - "Terrorism is neither the way to paradise nor to Palestine":** <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=JrmN-eMBfxM>

**4: (RM19) AUDIO (read aloud) - "To teach France, and all nations following its path, that they will remain at the top of Islamic State's list of targets":**

<http://www.dostor.org/928784>

- Have you encountered these messages? Have you seen any messages with the same argument? If so where?
- Do you know who made these? If yes, how?
- Do you think the statements given in these messages are truthful? Accurate?

**Behavioural analysis - When considering each one of the messages shown, read or heard, would you tend to strongly agree or disagree with the following:**

1. I identify with what is said and shown.
2. These messages are convincing in their argument.
3. I want to find more messages like these.
4. I would talk to a friend about these messages.
5. I would be worried about talking to people about these messages.

**Interpretative analysis:**

1. How do these messages make you feel? Why?
2. What words and symbols can you identify in these messages? What do they mean to you?
3. Would these messages change the way you behave after seeing this message. If so how?

**Probes:**

- What particular aspects of these messages are most appealing?
- What particular aspects of these messages are unappealing?

## Appendix 2: List of Pre-Selected Messages

### 1. Radical Messages

Speech	Date	Extract	Translation	Author	Link
لو کره الکافرون	Nov. 2014	عليكم اولا بالرافضة حينما وجدتموهم	Start fighting the rawafid  Read more: <a href="http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/11/baghdadi-speech-islamic-state-pledges-of-allegiance.html#ixzz405951TFd">http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2014/11/baghdadi-speech-islamic-state-pledges-of-allegiance.html#ixzz405951TFd</a>	Baghdadi	<a href="http://www.raiayoum.com/?p=178565">http://www.raiayoum.com/?p=178565</a>
لو کره الکافرون	Nov. 2014	مرقومهم اربا، نغصوا عليهم عيشهم، وعما قريب ان شاء الله تصلكم طلائع الدولة الاسلامية	Chop them to pieces, make their lives a living hell, and God willing, soon the vanguards of IS will arrive  <a href="http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/islamic-state-pledges-of-allegiance.html#ixzz4058G2LPt">http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/islamic-state-pledges-of-allegiance.html#ixzz4058G2LPt</a>	Baghdadi	<a href="http://www.raiayoum.com/?p=178566">http://www.raiayoum.com/?p=178566</a>
الخلافة	Aug. 2014	أيها المسلمون في كل مكان أبتشروا وأمنوا خيرا وارفعوا رؤوسكم عاليا فإن لكم اليوم بفضل الله دولة وخلافة تعيد كرامتكم وعزتكم وتسترجع حقوقكم وسيادتكم	O Muslims everywhere, glad tidings to you and expect good. Raise your head high, for today – by Allah’s grace – you have a state and khilafah, which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership. <a href="https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/islamic-state-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-encourages-emigration-worldwide-action.html">https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/islamic-state-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-encourages-emigration-worldwide-action.html</a>	Baghdadi	<a href="http://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2014/07/01/baghdadi-speech-isis">http://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2014/07/01/baghdadi-speech-isis</a>

Speech	Date	Extract	Translation	Author	Link
الخلافة	Aug. 2014	هلموا إلى دولتكم أيها المسلمون نعم دولتكم هلموا فليست سوريا للسوريين وليس العراق للعراقيين إن الأرض لله يورثها من يشاء والعاقبة للمتقين الدولة دولة المسلمين والأرض أرض المسلمين	Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis. The earth is Allah's. {Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah. He causes to inherit it whom He wills of His servants. https://news.siteintgroup.com/Jihadist-News/islamic-state-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-encourages-emigration-worldwide-action.html	Baghdadi	<a href="http://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2014/07/01/baghdadi-speech-isis">http://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2014/07/01/baghdadi-speech-isis</a>
نشيد	n/a	درب القتال طريق الحياة	The path of fighting is the path of life. <a href="http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/06/clashing-of-the-swords-new-isis-nasheed-from">http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/06/clashing-of-the-swords-new-isis-nasheed-from</a>	n/a	<a href="http://www.ghlasa.com/vb/showthread.php?t=12928">http://www.ghlasa.com/vb/showthread.php?t=12928</a>
نشيد	n/a	دولة الإسلام قامت بدماء الصّادقين دولة الإسلام قامت بجهاد المتّقين		n/a	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/Islamic.n.l/posts/939621839388400">https://www.facebook.com/Islamic.n.l/posts/939621839388400</a>
هارونا يوكاوا وكينجي غوتو	Jan. 2015	إننا بفضل الله خلافة إسلامية تملك القوة والسلطان وجيش كامل منعطش لدمائكم		Jihadi John	
معاد الكساسبة	Feb. 2015	اننا في شوق للقائكم ولقطع رقابكم ولشرب دمايكم , فتوبوا قبل ان تصل سكاكين احفاد ابي مصعب الزرقاوي اليكم	We long to meet you, to cut your heads off, and to drink your blood. Repent, for if you don't, the knives of Abi Musab Al-Zarqawi shall fall upon you	n/a	<a href="http://stepagency-sy.net/archives/36071">http://stepagency-sy.net/archives/36071</a>
معاد الكساسبة	Feb. 2016	لستم انتم الوحيدين من تلوعت قلوبكم , ام تشاهدوا ما فعله طيران التحالف بأبناء المسلمين في الدولة الاسلامية	You are not the only ones whose hearts are aching. Haven't you seen the air strikes that the Coalition planes have conducted against Muslims in the Islamic State?	n/a	<a href="http://stepagency-sy.net/archives/36072">http://stepagency-sy.net/archives/36072</a>

Speech	Date	Extract	Translation	Author	Link
ولنا عودة للولايات المتحدة	Sep.2015	يا أيها الأوروبيون: إن الدولة الإسلامية لم تبدأ بالقتال، كما توهمكم حكوماتكم، ويصور إعلامكم، أتم من بدأت الاعتداء علينا، والبداية، أظلم، وستدفعون الثمن غالياً، ستدفعون الثمن عندما ينهار اقتصادكم، وسوف تدفعون الثمن عندما يخاف أحدكم أن يسافر إلى أي بلد، بل ستدفعون الثمن عندما تمشون في شوارعكم تتلفتون حولكم، خوفاً من المسلمين، ولا تأمنون حتى في غرف نومكم	Oh Americans, and oh Europeans, the Islamic State did not initiate a war against you, as your governments and media try to make you believe. It is you who started the transgression against us, and thus you deserve blame and you will pay a great price. (Not the complete translation) <a href="http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/22/world/meast/isis-threatens-west/">http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/22/world/meast/isis-threatens-west/</a> + link to the video <a href="http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/islamic-state-release-chilling-video-6437907">http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/islamic-state-release-chilling-video-6437907</a>	n/a	<a href="http://www.dostor.org/892537">http://www.dostor.org/892537</a>
رسالة إلى أميركا	Aug. 2014	أي عدوان على الدولة الإسلامية هو عدوان على المسلمين الذين رضوا بأن تقودهم الخلافة الإسلامية بكل ألوانهم و سنتهم		Jihadi John	<a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=cqd6GtiU0uU">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=cqd6GtiU0uU</a>
اعرفوني اسماعكم	n/a	إن الدولة الإسلامية ستبقى وستبقى والحرب لن تعمل إلى على تقوية الحركة الجهادية		John Cantlie (episode 3)	<a href="http://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/news/video-1126889/Fourth-John-Cantlie-video-released-ISIS.html">http://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/news/video-1126889/Fourth-John-Cantlie-video-released-ISIS.html</a>
آية قرآنية	n/a	وأعدوا لهم ما استطعتم من قوة ومن رباط الخيل ترهبون به عدو الله وعدوكم		n/a	
زيارة للموصل	n/a	تمكن أهل السنة بأمان تحت ظل الشريعة	And Ahlus- Sunnah were able to live in security in the shade of the Shari'ah	n/a	<a href="http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=82773">http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=82773</a>
زيارة للموصل	n/a	لقد بذل الإخوة أنفسهم لكي يعدوا للإسلام مجده	The brothers exerted themselves to return the honor of islam	n/a	<a href="http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=82774">http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=82774</a>
زيارة للموصل	n/a	هكذا ينتشر السلام بالكلمة والسيف	islam spreads with the word and the sword	n/a	<a href="http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=82775">http://rudaw.net/NewsDetails.aspx?pageid=82775</a>



## 2. Counter-Radical Messages

Speech	Date	Extract	Translation	Author	Link
مؤتمر "الأزهر في مواجهة الإرهاب"	Dec. 2014	مفهوم الجهاد "من المفاهيم المحرفة" من قبل التنظيمات الجهادية "ومعناه الصحيح في الإسلام هو ما كان دفاعا عن النفس وردا للعدوان وإعلانه لا يكون إلا من ولي الأمر وليس متروكا لأي فرد أو جماعة مهما كان شأنها".	The concept of Jihad is "distorted": according to its correct meaning in Islam, it falls under the category of self-defense, in response to an act of aggression. It cannot be, in any case, declared by one person or group	Al Azhar	<a href="https://arabic.rt.com/news/766969-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8/">https://arabic.rt.com/news/766969-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8/</a>
المفتي دريان	Apr. 2015	الإسلام ينكر الغلو والتطرف وخاصةً باسم الدين ويدعو إلى الوسطية ومن يدعي أن ما يقوم به باسم الإسلام من إرهاب أو تطرف هو ضال وآثم		Mufti Derian	<a href="http://www.aliwaa.com/Article.aspx?ArticleId=243760">http://www.aliwaa.com/Article.aspx?ArticleId=243760</a>
زيارة المفتي دريان إلى ألمانيا	Feb. 2015	الإرهاب هو وباء ينبغي استئصاله أو الحد من انتشاره في مجتمعاتنا العربية		Mufti Derian	<a href="http://almustaqbal.com/v4/Article.aspx?Type=misc&amp;ArticleId=196733">http://almustaqbal.com/v4/Article.aspx?Type=misc&amp;ArticleId=196733</a>
الغزالي	n/a	ليست العودة إلى الإسلام إن كتبت على رأيتنا الله أكبر بل العودة ل الإسلام إن عملا قلوبنا بالله أكبر ونجعلها باعث أعمالنا وهدف حياتنا		الغزالي	<a href="https://twitter.com/alsofi_maya/status/547305217805795329">https://twitter.com/alsofi_maya/status/547305217805795329</a>
حمدة سعيد	Oct. 2014	احتفاء الإرهابيين بالأطفال عمل جبان		مفتي الجمهورية التونسية، حمدة سعيد	<a href="http://alwasat.ly/ar/news/tunis/43549/">http://alwasat.ly/ar/news/tunis/43549/</a>

Speech	Date	Extract	Translation	Author	Link
الشيخ عبدالعزیز بن عبد الله بن محمد آل الشيخ	Aug. 2014	أن أفكار التطرف والتشدد والإرهاب الذي يفسد في الأرض ويهالك الحرث والنسل ليس من الإسلام في شيء ، بل هو عدو الإسلام الأول ، والمسلمون هم أول ضحاياه	“The ideas of extremism, radicalism and terrorism ... are the first enemy of Islam, and Muslims are their first victims...” “The ideas of extremism, radicalism and terrorism do not belong to Islam in any way, but are the first enemy of Islam, and Muslims are their first victims, as seen in the crimes of the so-called Daash (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda and their affiliated groups.” <a href="https://pearlsofislam.wordpress.com/2014/08/24/grand-mufti-the-ideas-of-extremism-radicalism-and-terrorism-are-the-first-enemy-of-islam-and-muslims-are-their-first-victims/">https:// pearlsofislam.wordpress.com/2014/08/24/ grand-mufti-the-ideas-of-extremism-radicalism- and-terrorism-are-the-first-enemy-of-islam-and- muslims-are-their-first-victims/</a>	الشيخ عبدالعزیز بن عبد الله بن محمد آل الشيخ	<a href="http://www.albayan.ac/one-world/arabs/2014-08-19-1.2185389">http://www.albayan.ac/one-world/ arabs/2014-08-19-1.2185389</a>
مؤتمر الحكومة الموريتانية حول الإرهاب	Oct. 2010	الإرهاب ليس طريقاً للجنة ولا فلسطين	Terrorism is neither the way to paradise nor to Palestine	عبد الله بنه	<a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=JrmN-cMBfxM">https://www.YouTube.com/ watch?v=JrmN-cMBfxM</a>
تفجيرات شمال سيناء	Jan. 2015	منفذو تلك الأعمال الإرهابية مفسدون في الأرض ، ومستحقون لعزري الله في الدنيا والآخرة، والإسلام بريء من هؤلاء الإرهابيين		الدكتور شوقي علام	<a href="http://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=30012015&amp;id=40a5ec67-69d9-4a4f-baa9-c05c4d28bc99">http://www.shorouknews.com /news/view.aspx?cdate=30012015 &amp;id=40a5ec67-69d9-4a4f-baa 9-c05c4d28bc99</a>
Facebook	n/a	الإرهاب أنا مسلم أنا ضده	Terrorism; I am a muslim I am against it	Say no to terror	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/saynototerror/photos_stream#">https://www.facebook.com/ saynototerror/photos_stream#</a>
الشيخ عبد الله المطلق	Apr. 2015	الإسلام لا يقر أعمال القتل والتفجير وقطع الرؤوس		الشيخ عبد الله المطلق	<a href="http://www.alriyadh.com/923578">http://www.alriyadh.com/923578</a>

Speech	Date	Extract	Translation	Author	Link
الشيخ عادل الكلباني	Aug. 2014	منهج السلف سماحة، ورفق ولين ولا مكان للغلو والتزمت فيه، وهو منهج ينشر المحبة والإحسان وقبول الآخر بين المسلمين، والتعايش مع غير المسلمين، لكن الشأن كل الشأن في فهمه وتطبيقه واقفا لا ادعاءً، تطبيقاً متناعماً متجانساً بين عراقة الماضي ومتطلبات الحاضر	Actually, there is no connection between the path of these extremists and the [true] path of the Salafis – which is tolerance, compassion, and gentleness, and in which there is no place for extremism and [religious] fanaticism. [Salafism] is a path that spreads love, brotherhood, and acceptance of the other among Muslims and coexistence with non-Muslims. But the thing is to understand it and to implement it – and not [just to] pretend [to do so] – in a way that is compatible with the deep roots of the past and with the demands of the present. <a href="http://islam.hilmi.eu/senior-saudi-salafi-cleric-isis-is-a-true-product-of-salafism/">http://islam.hilmi.eu/senior-saudi-salafi-cleric-isis-is-a-true-product-of-salafism/</a>	الشيخ عادل الكلباني	<a href="http://www.alriyadh.com/963279">http://www.alriyadh.com/963279</a>
YouTube	Jan. 2014	إعرف عدوك المتطرف عدوك	Know your enemy - The extremist is your enemy	Say no to terror	<a href="https://youtu.be/2NpEXoCjsKE">https://youtu.be/2NpEXoCjsKE</a>
Twitter	Jan. 2016	طريق صناعة الموت الداعشية مرصوفة بضحايا سقطوا في شباك تجنيد داعش بسبب الجهل وانعدام الوعي بأبعاد هذا التنظيم الإرهابي. لا تكونوا ضحية!	The way to the death factory that is Daesh is paved with the corpses of victims who fell in the net of the organization, be it by ignorance or by lack of awareness of the terrorist facets of Daesh. Don't be a victim!	Sawab center	<a href="https://twitter.com/sawabcenter/status/692724012934381568">https://twitter.com/sawabcenter/status/692724012934381568</a>
YouTube	Apr. 2015	الارهابيون عازمون على تضليل أبنائنا		Say no to terror	<a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=1u2SB5oplFY">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=1u2SB5oplFY</a>
آية	n/a	وما للظالمين من نصيب		سورة الحج ٧١	<a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=JAK-l-SCkv0">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=JAK-l-SCkv0</a>
Twitter	Jan. 2016	كم من المحزن أن تجد شيا في سن الدراسة يتخلى عن كنبه ومستقبله وأسرته ووطنه ليلتحق بجماعات #الانتحار والقتل و #الإرهاب باسم الدين. #لا لداعش		Sawab center	<a href="https://twitter.com/sawabcenter/status/692060210148556800">https://twitter.com/sawabcenter/status/692060210148556800</a>
آية	NA	وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ حَقًّا وَظَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُضْمِنِينَ		سورة الأعراف ٥٦	<a href="http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/ecerab/sura7-aya56.html">http://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/ecerab/sura7-aya56.html</a>
YouTube	Apr. 2016	الاف الأبرياء يقضون ضحايا إرهابيين مضللين يتسبرون بالإسلام		Say no to terror	<a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=08oLPfCVuS0">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=08oLPfCVuS0</a>





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