

## CAFA Consultative Meeting

### Minutes

09:15 am-04:30 pm, at El Mechtel Hotel, Tunis, Tunisia

October 27, 2016

In October 27, 2016, the founding meeting of the network CAFA "*Civic Actors against violent Extremism*" was held, under the initiative of the Applied Social Science Forum, and a number of civil society organizations, and in the presence of civil society activists and representatives of some concerned ministries, and the Government via the Minister in charge of the relationship with civil society and Human Rights.

### Opening Session



Mr. Abdelwahab Ben Hafaiedh, President of the Applied Social Sciences Forum (ASSF), opened the meeting by presenting a project for the foundation of the network, which reflects the civil society understanding of the issue of violent extremism, and their endeavor to combine efforts to open up to

the civil society and public opinion. Henceforth, this network seeks to combat the phenomenon of violent extremism, which directly participated in the decline of Tunisia in the stability index and the decline in investment possibilities.



**Mr. Taoufik Bouaoun**, *representative of the Minister for Relations with the Constitutional Bodies, Civil Society and Human Rights* stated that the civil society has become a partner with the government, based on Chapter 7 of the Tunisian Constitution, and that participation in policymaking has become a

constitutional right. He also pointed to the lack of associations, which are able to detect threats and parties who are target of terrorist attacks, which makes the identification of polarization processes and regulatory standards incomplete. In fact, 90% of the State's weakness is caused by the lack of the necessary data to empower researchers. He also called for the identification of the different forms of polarization. Mr. Bouaoun pointed to the absence of agreements between the government and various actors in the fight against violent extremism, and the assignments of tasks and roles.

## First Session



**Mr. Zied Krishen** (Editor of Al Maghreb newspaper) presided over the first morning session devoted to question, why there is a need for civil networking and preventive efforts in the fight against violent extremism. :

Mr. Krishen wondered if we were facing a well-identified concept of “violent extremism,” as there should be a separation between extremism and violence, and separation of extremism and religion. He said that we are facing a specific phenomenon and that we must use four concepts to better grasp the different conceptualizations: Terrorism, power, Jihadism, and globalization. He pondered on how it is possible for the civil society to approach the youth, and how civil society can go to these social, mental, and cultural margins. Therefore, he proposed the establishment of a civil society in the periphery, rather than limit themselves to the ‘Center’.



### **Speech of Mr. Ridha Sfar (Tunisia Alternatives):**

Mr. Ridha Sfar had introduced *Tunisia Alternatives*, which focuses on public policies and acts in the

security and defense sectors. He highlighted the fact that the civil society should create a vision that they have not thought of before. To do so, the Tunisian civil society needs to cooperate with the different government institutions, and thus avoid seclusion and narrow-mindedness, by bridging existing gaps, and he speculated on how to bridge these gaps?

He emphasized that the phenomenon of violent extremism is linked to the following factors:

- Tunisia geo-strategic location, which directly affects the penetration of this thought, as a result of nearness to Libyan borders, in addition to the state chaos in the mosques, the Internet, and associations ...
- Terrorism affects the fragile youth and it rapidly shifts from a thought to a violent practice. The speaker stated that we are fighting a thought and not a phenomenon. In the end, he emphasized the importance of networking.



**Speech of Mr. Abdellatif Hannachi, *President of the Maghreb Center for Democracy Studies:***

The speaker presented a sample of the reasons and factors of extremism, and the challenges posed by fighters returning from conflict zones. He also pointed to the historical background of this phenomenon and linked it to religious organizations, which shifted towards practicing violence. He stressed the communities' receptiveness to extremism and violence, noting that the Tunisian society is conservative that is it is likely to be receptive to extremism. He said that

violence permeates daily life, and added that social marginalization is a factor whose limits cannot be easily measured.



**Speech of Mr. Mohamed Jouili:** *President of Youth National Observatory*

The speaker said that the main challenge, in parallel with the security concerns, is the cognitive challenge. He noted that there should be knowledge interaction, before embarking on networking between civil society actors. He also pointed to the weakness in the production of knowledge about the phenomenon. He said we should identify causation, without dealing with terrorism in itself, and by shying away from the proportional approach.

**Second Session**



The second session focused on which ideas are needed for the prevention of violent extremism. **Mrs. Samia Daoula** chaired the session. She indicated that human rights-oriented civil society organizations have not been interested in the phenomenon, but paid due attention to the practices of the Ministry of the Interior and to the fair trial, so that the civil society breaks away from the changes taking place in the Tunisian youth.



**Speech by Mr. Nouri Lajmi, *President of the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA)***

The speaker mentioned that prevention against violent extremism should rely on studies and researches on the role of media institutions, which will be a double-edged weapon, as it was the case in “Rwanda- Ivory Coast”, for instance. He highlighted the need for the creation of research and studies center, which is concerned with audio-visual media data and their feedback on the current issues, and their interest in media review. He added that it is necessary to promote “research in citizenship” and integration of politicians in research on the phenomenon of terrorism. He pointed to the media dealing with hate speech and violence. He said that a guidance document for media coverage of terror operations has been issued. In the same vein, he called for the creation of specialized research centers in each structure that has to do with public affairs, issue a guidance document for how to deal with terrorism, and find notification mechanisms and openness to the rest of the structures.



**Speech by Mr. Taoufik Bouderbala, *President of the High Commission for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,***

Mr. Bouderbala talked about the following:

- The experience of the Arab Board for the Human Rights Arab Authorities, which made explicit responses to violent extremism through its activities.
- Prevention shall be concerned with the deployment of human rights principles and the responsibility of civil society to educate the emerging generations.
- There should be coordination with research centers, that conducted studies on the same issue, so that to avoid redundancy.



**Speech by Mr. Mokhtar Ben Nasr, *President of the Tunisian Center for Global Security Studies***

He pointed out that the issue is not purely cognitive, but it needs involvement of social and economic parties. He also pointed out that the parties that are in the process of attracting youth use terms and concepts that can be defined as hostile.

The speaker highlighted the need to address the educational curricula that are still based on indoctrination, and not on the framing of the human mind and critical thinking.



**Speech by Mr. Khaled Louhichi, *expert at the United Nations***

He showed how the Arab countries are the most concerned with the issue of violent extremism. The

scanty studies and research on the increase in youth population has a very strong relationship with extremism and radical violence and violent extremism. Many studies expect that the phenomenon of violence extremism, which overlap with the rise in youth population, will remain on the rise. The speaker felt that there is an ongoing study on youth perceptions of themselves and about warding off from being swept into the net of polarization. He added that a magazine about young people and violence and terrorism has been issued recently.

**Comments by Mr. Abdelwahab Ben Hafaiedh, *President of the ASSF***

The speaker pointed out to the relationship between the sociological profile and the phenomenon of violent extremism. He stressed the fact that there is a close relationship between daily physical and verbal violence and violence against women and between extremism and violent extremism. He added that violent extremism is not a historical inevitability in the region, and that one should not forget that suicide attacks began with "Tamil Tigers" in the eighties, before being introduced by Arab terrorists, and that religious extremism is a globalized phenomenon as is the case for "Lord's Resistance Army," which left 100,000 casualties. This means that, even if *Daesh* is ending, and we do witness this happen before our eyes today, religious extremism can reemerge again through being prominent with the fourth generation. This is what justifies the thinking for creating preventive research formulas for the future.

## Discussion



**Mr. Maher Gaddour**, *head of the human rights' cell at the Ministry of the Interior*, initiated discussions. He focused on the United Nations counter-terrorism strategy with respect for the human rights. He added that the most important pillar of the fight against violent extremism is the respect for human rights and the structural treatment of this phenomenon (that is in the detention centers).



**Ms. Naila Feki**, *member of the National Committee for Combating Terrorism (Prime Ministry)*, highlighted how a national strategy to combat terrorism will be developed. The latter will be based mainly on prevention, protection, mitigation and response. She also noted that there is a need to include young people in the formulation of solutions to bridge the gap between themselves and the State.



**Mr. Bouraoui Ouni**, *expert in security reform, Search for Common Ground*, Noticed that the National Commission for the fight against Terrorism should operate within a framework that transcends sectors and ministries.



Mr. Slaheddine Jourchi, *Al-Arabi Al-Jadid*, distinguished that individual tracks are not separated from switching to extremism. There are factors related to tracks that pave the ground for the shift towards terrorism.

### Session 3

The third session was devoted to the discussion of the KAFa network establishment procedures.



Mr. Faiçal Dchicha, *Regional Coordinator of the Program to Support the Civil Society (Pasc)*, mentioned that there should be a mapping of the different initiatives that have been already undertaken, in the same framework on the national

and local levels, and build on works and initiatives that have been undertaken in some regions. He also noted that the different actors should open up to the official institutions, that they should not neglect the fieldwork, and that they should build contacts with local parties, which may reflect the true picture of the proposed problematic.

In the same vein, Mrs. Naila Faki, raised questions on the creation of a network, which will be centered on the mechanism of interaction between associations among themselves and with official institutions. She added that there is an urgent need to summon all various associations, whatever their interests are. The network should not limit itself to the civil society specialized in the fight against terrorism, or the one involved in the defense of human rights. It is possible to include educational, sports and cultural associations.



**Mr. Wahid Labidi**, *civil society activist*, stated that the lack of control, organization and coordination among civil society actors and the government, in the creation of a strategy for the fight against violent extremism pose a challenge today, which explains the absence of tangible results in the context of the prevention of violent extremism. In this regard, Mr. Labidi said that the network should ensure division of tasks between the associations and uniting efforts to reach concrete and tangible results. There are some fieldwork activities, which the state by itself cannot perform, thus it is possible for local civil society to accomplish, given their competence and direct contact with the citizens in these regions.



**Mr. Mongi Boughzala**, *former dean of the Faculty of Economics of Tunis*, has observed that:

- All participating civil society should employ their competences and expertise for the success of the initiative.
- KAFA network should have a legal framework in the form of a coordinating association, whose resources should be diversified to ensure the most possible independence in the eyes of the civilians and official partners. KAFA can also support local small associations.



**Mr. Sami Belhaj**, *Tunisian Association for Social Cohesion*, stated that the concept of “social cohesion” and "the dynamics of tension" should be included in the project draft paper. He added that, with regard to previous experiences, KAFA should

start from an informal coordinating initiative that span a six-month or a one-year period, during which the intervening members should evaluate their work, by coalescing in the form of an association or a coalition of associations. He stated that they should target priorities in KAFA road map, include local communities in this initiative, and address these partners to be able to understand the specificities and paths of this phenomenon, and not to rely on ready-made templates that failed to diagnose it.

In conclusion, Mr. Abdelwahab Ben Hafaiedh summed up the ideas that were brought about in the morning session, including the following:

- Proposition to embark on a transition experience
- Start working within a coordinating framework for a period of 6 months

- Involve as many local partners as possible in the two regional meetings.
- KAFA network should be made of three basic components to ensure the effectiveness and success of the initiative, namely:
  - Research groups
  - Group of professional partners
  - Group of influential actors

The closing session was devoted for putting practical mechanisms in place for the creation of the network.

- Many ideas were jotted down (including those from Mr. Walid Omrane, Mr. Faiçal Dchicha, Mr. Bouraoui Ouni, Mr. Sami Belhaj, Mrs. Fathia Chaabane, and others....). These are:
  - take advantage of learned lessons.
  - Need to understand that this is a complex phenomenon.
  - There are initiatives and networks that soon disappeared.
  - How to make this network an effective one, and how to measure its effectiveness?
  - Counter-terrorism policies should not be left solely to government institutions to deal with.
  - This coalition should be a space of exchange and provision of exchange mechanisms.

- There should be a reliance on an official partner to ensure efficiency.
- KAFA network should include as many civil actors as possible.
- Start from legal framework and transform the network into an organization at a later stage.
- continue and deepen the dialogue on KAFA network and its composition and working conditions.
- It is highly important to employ experts who are familiar with the establishment of lobbies and engagement in hot debates.
- The value of the network relies on the parties who will join it.
- Networking aims at making use of each association competencies.