

The CENTER UPDATE

“Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

We have professionally upgraded our website which you can today visit at www.center2000.org. You can now navigate through its some 36 pages more comfortably and faster and with better viewing - whether on computer, cell phone or tablet. And it has new content, such as an inventory of all our Center Updates since their inception at the beginning of the 21st century. Just click on “Archives” to see them. You can easily access as well as pull up each individual Update in its entirety for reading, copying or printing. At the bottom of each web page our various office locations are described pictorially (our new Middle East office soon to be added). And, it’s even easier than ever to make a donation with only a few simple clicks. Even though the new site has only been up and running a short time, the reviews are all very positive. And we find that more and more people are visiting it than before.

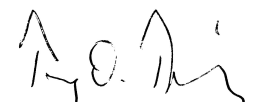
The Middle East is the birthplace of much of modern religious-based conflict and violence. And, as we know it is also the birthplace of the three major western religions - Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Even today it is where much, though certainly not all, of the religious-based conflict and violence continues. For this reason we are exploring the opening of a new Middle East Office in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to more closely bring our investigations and research to that very important part of the world where so much of the conflict and violence resides. The UAE, as we described in our earlier Fall 2022 UPDATE, is a unique country in the Middle East. It was not only the first Arab

country to normalize diplomatic, cultural and social relations with Jewish Israel, but also to allow houses of worship for all major religions on its soil.

In the capital of Abu Dhabi, for instance, one finds the Abrahamic Family House, a multi-faith complex, which not only houses the His Holiness Francis Christian church which faces the rising sun, the Islamic Eminence Ahmed El-Tayeb mosque which is oriented towards Mecca and the Jewish Moses Ben Maimon synagogue, facing towards Jerusalem - all of equal size. There is also a sprawling area for inter-faith dialogue and related events. This is a unique complex and symbol in the Middle East.

The name of this magnificent facility itself symbolizes the fact that Abraham is the Father of all three of the major western religions. And the scattering of not only mosques but Christian churches and cathedrals, Jewish synagogues and Hindu temples as well, evidences and emphasizes one of the many unique common threads of similarity of these religions found in the UAE.

We had the good fortune of visiting this complex in May and were overcome with its significance as well as beauty. It stands less than a mile away from the equally imposing Emirates Louvre Museum in Abu Dhabi. It is a powerful example of the emphasis of religious similarities in lieu of their differences, as are too often expressed.



Terry O. Trowbridge



HOTSPOTS

United States

There were a record 3,697 reported antisemitic incidents in the United States in 2022, according to an annual tally by the Anti-Defamation League released in April. The figure amounted to 10 incidents per day and represented a 36 percent jump over 2021, which was already a record year. The 2022 tally (the most recent year for such statistics) was the highest since the ADL started keeping records in 1979. Incidents were reported in every state. Large increases were recorded in white supremacist propaganda activities, non-Jewish schools, college campuses, bomb threats and attacks against Orthodox Jews. ■

Africa

As we have previously noted in past Updates, the religious-based conflict in, for example, Nigeria involving Boko Haram alone has claimed the lives of more than 20,000 people since 2009. Likewise, there is Somalia where more than 30,000 have perished from such violence since the early 1990s. And, this is only a tiny example of the personal losses and collateral damage which has been incurred in that region. Add to this the Sahel region, Chad, Niger, Somali, Kenya & Uganda to name a few others.

Though most of these African conflicts involve Islamists, it would be grossly misleading to equate Islamists to Muslims. The increasing number of such conflicts simply cannot be explained by the presence of Muslims alone, which has not increased correspondingly. As shown by survey data from the Pew Research Center from 2010 and 2013 (Pew Research Center 2010, 2013), only a minority of African Muslims support religious conflict and violence. It is clear that those who use religion in their claims are merely weaponizing religion or espousing shallow rhetoric to justify the ensuing violence, i.e. the violence is really “religious-based”, though not a term normally used in the media.

Mozambique

Radical Islamist militants have been trying for some time to establish a so-called Islamic State in the province of Cabo Delgado in Mozambique. So far their efforts have met resistance from the Mozambican state and law enforcement authorities. However, insurgent groups such as Ansar al-Sunna (Mozambique) have been

indiscriminately targeting servicemen and civilians in the region since 2020, though no exact statistics of the casualties are available. Islamist attacks and counterattacks have taken place repeatedly in Mozambique since 2020, but news of the events rarely have made it to major media outlets due to limits on the freedom of media in that area. ■

POTPOURRI

(What you may not have read or heard in the news)

Germany

In this fall, 67 years after the European Conference of Rabbis was founded in London, it is planning to move its headquarters to the Bavarian capital, Munich. There, it plans to open a "Center for Jewish Life" with educational programs catering mainly to Europe's 1,000 Jewish rabbis.

Munich is, notoriously, the city where Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler began his rise to power in the 1920s. The city was later hailed by the Nazis as the "capital of the movement". Germany's third-largest city is also the place where eleven Israeli athletes were killed in a hostage-taking attack by the militant terrorist group, Black September, at the 1972 Olympics there.

The decision comes at a time when Jewish life in Germany is becoming more visible and more diverse, even with the persistently high number of antisemitic incidents, which continues to be disturbing - not only in Germany but throughout much of Europe. Liberal, conservative, and orthodox rabbis are trained and ordained in Germany and then serve in numerous European countries. Jewish voices can more often be heard in public debate and in the media. Another sign of the increasing emphasis on those common threads of similarity which all religions have in Europe as well as more tolerance to Jews - an historically discriminated against religion. ■

COSTS

There are at least three kinds of costs to individuals, businesses and governments from religious-based conflict and violence namely financial, economic and hidden. As an example of the latter, it has been shown



from studies in Spain which have determined that exposure of expectant mothers to violence, especially terrorism, has detrimental effects on birth outcomes - in terms of average birth weight (lower), prevalence of low birth weight (higher) and number of “normal” babies born (lower). Due to space limitations, however, below we describe only actual and potentially calculable financial costs.

In the past we have described the financial costs to the United States alone of the Iraq and Afghan conflicts as they continued to accrue. Since the USA has removed most of its troops from Iraq and has completed the removal of its forces in Afghanistan those costs, while still increasing, will now reflect the cost of advisory support of local forces as well as other indirect costs as they incur. However, additional costs are now being incurred because of the threat by ISIS in Iraq, Syria, again in Afghanistan and other parts of the Middle East and Africa as well.

In Afghanistan the US military and civilian forces have, after 20+ years now completely left that country. Total costs for their period of stay are estimated to be circa \$1 trillion. This figure does not include the yet to be calculated costs of the final withdrawal fiasco August, 2021 where some 3 times the number of the remaining military troops had to, at the eleventh hour, be sent back there to rescue some 2,500 military forces and over 15,000 stranded US citizens and their families. The approximately \$1 trillion 20+ year cost substantially increased the interest on the national debt during that period as well. Total costs since 2001 for this debt alone are approximately an additional \$2+ trillion.

In Iraq costs are again increasing due to the recent and new insertion of “non-combat” troops, advisors and their support, as well as the initiation of more and more air activity and humanitarian aid. Costs since 2003 total \$2.8+ trillion with an additional cost of \$610+ billion in benefits owed Iraq war veterans. Add to this circa \$4+ trillion of interest on expenses for the war since 2003.

The costs of confronting ISIS alone, (not the only instigator of religious-based conflict and violence) and not including Afghanistan, Syria or African countries, are \$51+ billion a year and are increasing dramatically each month.

Finally, total costs for combating religious-based conflict to the USA alone since 2001 are more than \$8,3+ trillion, not including the ensuing interest on US debt because of these expenditures of an additional \$1,4+ trillion.

Some may disagree with these totals or the way they are calculated, but it is fair to say that they continue to be astonishing. While they cannot be 100% accurate, they do at least, generally reflect the costs generated by these religious-based conflicts as borne by the United States. Note that these financial costs are for attacking the *effects* of religious-based conflict alone. None of these costs are associated with attacking its *causes* only its *effects*. ■

ABOUT THE CENTER

What the Center, as a totally independent NGO, does is unique. No other such organization has as its sole goal the reduction of religious-based conflict through a practical and specific approach which goes beyond tolerance. We believe this problem is larger than religions themselves, not within their total control, and one which cannot be solved by them alone. They need our help. Non-believers and governments alike must work to support them in this effort.

In this respect, the Center’s primary mission is education. To educate, we must first publicize the problem of religious-based conflict and show how it affects all of us - either directly or indirectly; either physically or financially - and in many instances, both. We then educate by offering an approach towards its reduction not heretofore recognized, showing how we must go beyond tolerance, the current mantra for its so-called resolution, if we are to succeed. We describe this step in practical, realistic, not altruistic terms.

The Center does not purport to be able to *resolve* this problem; rather we show how the people and their governments can approach it and eventually cause change in the direction of its reduction. Since humans are imperfect, we cannot expect to totally resolve the problem of religious-based conflict, but



we can, through this method, substantially reduce it to at least manageable proportions.

You can help reduce religious-based conflict in the world – probably more than you think you can. Even though individuals have limited power when acting alone, when they act as part of a group with a common purpose, this power increases geometrically. By supporting the Center - morally, actively or financially, you do just that - have more impact. For those of you who provide your moral support, we thank you. For those who either as formal Volunteers or as individuals discuss with others the Center's work, we cannot be more appreciative. For those who have the financial means and make charitable contributions to support our efforts, we are forever grateful to you.

Our cause is unique. Our message is spreading daily to more and more people and governments throughout the world. Our work continues to receive praise from those who know of it.

But we must reach more people and more governments in order to increase our impact. And in this process, we must not only publicize the problem of religious-based conflict, as well as its astonishing and growing costs to us all; but we must also explain why tolerance is not the answer to this problem. And, finally, we are leading the way towards *educating* the people and their governments, showing them *how* to attain this goal with a practical and realistic plan.



Yes, I want to support the Center!

www.center2000.org

To donate now to either the Center's Operational Fund or to its Endowment Fund account using your credit card or online bank check, go to:

<https://www.networkforgood.org/donation/ExpressDonation.aspx?ORGID2=656319302>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

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