

# 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

## In Our 22<sup>d</sup> Year

Now read in more than 42 countries throughout the world

Vol. XXII No. 1

Winter, 2021/2022

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

### Has religious-based conflict reached the West?

Most of us think of religious-based conflict as being somewhere else - in the Middle East, Africa, the developing countries, etc. - places other than where we are. But the truth of the matter is, that it is also very well embedded in the West, particularly in Europe and the USA - right where many of us are. It just doesn't get the same kind of media coverage in these places, principally because there are no big names attached such as al Qaeda, ISIS, the Taliban among others - the known initiators and actors in this kind of religious-based conflict. But they are always somewhere else.

The West has its conflict and violence but it is usually associated with “criminal” violence - physical attacks, burglary, murder, rape, etc. more often than not emotional, connected with greed, alcohol, or drugs.

One well-known kind of conflict in (not only) the West is anti-semitism, i.e. discrimination and conflict against Jews simply because they are Jews. As such it is surely religious-based conflict, that is discrimination and violence against another in the name of religion though it is not necessarily done by another religion itself. Some examples are:

- In the USA one out of every four Jews was the victim of antisemitism in the last year, according to the latest AJC survey.

- As antisemitism against Jews soar in Canada, Irwin Colter, Canada's special antisemitism envoy said: “Antisemitism is the oldest, most enduring, most virulent, most sophisticated and lethal of hatreds.” And, likewise one of the oldest forms of religious-based conflict in human history.

- Belgium is subject to an increasing level of antisemitism, causing alarm and distress to the minority Jewish community, according to a recent UN survey.

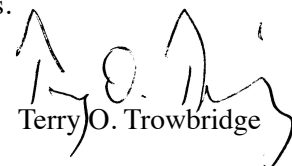
- There is growing antisemitism in Italy according to a recent survey conducted by the London based Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

- In the Netherlands a large majority of the people believe antisemitism has increased in the last five years, especially on the Internet.

- Facing record levels of antisemitism, many French Jews have joined an exodus to Israel. A third of all the French Jews who've emigrated to Israel since its establishment in 1948 have done so in the last 10 years. As recently as 2015 nearly 8,000 French Jews made what is known as *Aliyah*—ascent to the Holy Land - the largest number from any Western nation in a single year.

- In Europe 22% of Jews currently feel unsafe in their cities because of antisemitism, a 300+% increase since 2008.

And so it goes.

  
Terry O. Trowbridge



# HOTSPOTS

## Central African Republic

The worsening strife in the Central African Republic (CAR) with its Muslim-Christian overtones risks escalating into sustained violence along religious lines and spilling beyond the country's borders, further destabilizing the whole region, a United Nations top political officer warned. "Killings in Bangui (the capital) and in the rest of the country continue every day, and the population remains divided along religious affiliation," Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman told the Security Council in a briefing on the impoverished nation, where thousands of people are estimated to have been killed, nearly 1 million driven from their homes, and 2.2 million, about half the population, need humanitarian aid.

As a result of its predominantly Muslim composition, abuses against the Christian populations in the CAR were quickly interpreted as a religious-based conflict pitting Muslims against Christians. Nearly one in every two inhabitants of Bangui has been driven from their homes, some 513,000 in all, of whom 100,000 are at a makeshift camp at the airport. For the first time in CAR's history people have felt obliged on account of their religion to leave the country for fear of their lives, and several nearby countries including Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal, have repatriated tens of thousands of their citizens, the vast majority of them Muslims.

## Mali

The jihadists came one night in November on motorcycles and surrounded a remote village, Yagha, on Mali's eastern border with Niger. By the early hours of the next morning, over 130 civilians were confirmed dead by the government - the worst terrorist atrocity in the history of Mali which has been plunged into extremist violence in recent years, prompting calls to intensify international counter-terror efforts across West Africa.

During the three-hour onslaught on this village, the militants shot indiscriminately, setting fire to homes and a market before lobbing explosives at civilians seeking refuge in gold-mining caves, according to

government officials and nongovernmental organizations based in the region. Though no one has yet claimed the killings, government officials were certain it was the work of Islamic State's regional affiliate, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, or ISGS, which has killed hundreds of civilians in recent months.

Mali has been struggling to contain an Islamist insurgency that first erupted in the north in 2012 and has since claimed thousands of military and civilian lives. Despite the presence of thousands of French and UN troops, the conflict has engulfed central Mali and spread to neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger.

Central Mali has become one of the most violent hotspots of the Sahel-wide conflict, where such killings and attacks on government forces have become frequent occurrences. ■

# POTPOURRI

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

## The Middle East

Strangely, as religious-based conflict increases in Africa and the West, it appears to be pausing, even decreasing, in the Middle East. This is clearly, in part at least, due to the rapprochement between the Israelis and a growing number of nearby Middle Eastern Arab countries. ■

# 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 (lower). Due to space limitations, however, below we describe only financial costs.



**I**n 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.

**I**n 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 last August 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.

**I**n 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 \$2.0+ trillion with an additional cost of \$600+ billion in benefits owed Iraq war veterans. Add to this circa \$4+ trillion of interest on expenses for the war since 2003.

**T**he costs of confronting ISIS alone, (not the only instigator of religious-based conflict and violence) and not including Afghanistan, Syria or African countries, are \$49+ billion a year and are increasing dramatically each month.

**F**inally, total costs for combating religious-based conflict to the USA alone since 2001 are more than \$5.4+ trillion, not including the ensuing interest on US debt because of these expenditures of an additional \$828+ million.

**S**ome 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 may not 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*. ■

## **ABOUT THE CENTER**

**W**hat 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.

**I**n 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.

**T**he 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.

**Y**ou 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.

**O**ur 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.

**B**ut 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.



---

PLEASE CHECK BELOW. WE'VE MADE IT EASIER FOR YOU TO DONATE TO THE CENTER

**Yes, I want to support the Center!**

[www.center2000.org](http://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>

**Or, for our US readers, you can DONATE WITHOUT DONATING!**

**When you shop at Amazon**

**go to: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/65-6319302>**

(Same Website as Amazon.com)

And, every time you buy, **Amazon makes a donation to the Center.**  
(Their prices remain the same - even with their donation!)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

Center For Reduction of Religious-Based Conflict  
649 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 201  
Naples, Florida 34102, USA  
Telephone: (239) 821-4850; Email: centerrel@center2000.org