

# 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

### MOVING FORWARD

**The Center was formed** with the view that the then so-called religious-based conflict could be substantially reduced and brought down to a manageable basis. Now, after nearly sixteen years of our existence the first phase of that approach is being brought to reality. As our website describes, our Mission Statement provides for a three-phase approach to reducing this conflict, the first phase being to *sensitize* the world to the problem, explaining its causes and its costs - not only in human life but also in terms of money, property and culture. As we have said, a problem cannot be solved until one is aware of it and understands its impact.

So, for these first sixteen years what the Center has done has been to pursue this initial phase of our mission. We have done this through production of our website, [www.center2000.org](http://www.center2000.org), which reaches across the world to millions; through our book, *Beyond Tolerance*, through this newsletter, *The Center Update*, through personal appearance on radio and TV, through talks and speeches to interested groups, and through attendance at relevant conferences and seminars. In these ways, we have come in contact with countless numbers of people throughout the world - people of all races, religions and cultures. Responses to these efforts have been overwhelming and deeply satisfying. People *understand*

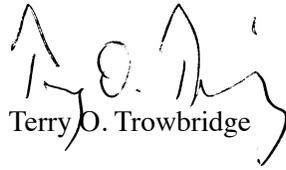
and believe in what we are doing and why. They have told us so.

**More**, the problem has been redefined. Heretofore (that is before the year 2000) the world, with its political and intellectual leaders was referring to “religious conflict” - a phrase which was a misnomer, which did not describe the problem the world was facing. We produced the phrase “religious-based conflict” which was hitherto an unknown and unused description of this massive, worldwide problem. Today, “religious-based conflict” is accepted as its credible description. How do we know this? And, why does it make a difference? Newspapers and news media now routinely use this phrase. We have seen it used in, for example, German newspapers. It is now an accepted way to describe the problem. No longer do we talk about “religious conflict”; “Religious-based conflict” is the norm. This makes a difference because, as we know, we cannot understand and solve a problem until it is first clearly and succinctly described. This is what this phrase has done!

Indications are good, therefore, that we are well into succeeding with the first phase of our Mission. This is not to say that we have completed it, far from it, but we have made substantial progress - enough progress that now, we can approach with some surety, our second phase. This second phase covers *education* - particularly of the children but also of adults - towards reducing the current overemphasis on differences and learning to find those common threads of similarity - which all religions have. How we do this now becomes our next task.



We will delve more into this task of dealing with phase two in the next and following Updates.



Terry O. Trowbridge

## HOTSPOTS

### Lampedusa, Italy

The western news media began intensely reporting on the “serious refugee crisis” in southern Europe in the summer of 2015 - as if it were something new and had just begun. To set the facts straight this refugee crisis has been going on since early 2011. Then the tiny island of Lampedusa in the Mediterranean began to be flooded with refugees from Libya and other northern Africa points. In fact Lampedusa was quickly overcome with the sheer numbers of people and desperately sought the help of the European Union, of which Italy is a member. These refugees, who initially came from religious-based conflict in central and northern Africa, subsequently began arriving from Egypt and Syria as well. Help, including development of an infrastructure to deal with this crisis has been slow and sporadic in coming. Again, governments did not see the obvious coming and now all of Europe will suffer.

To date hundreds of thousands of refugees from religious-based conflict from these and more countries have arrived at several places including Lampedusa, overwhelming the ability of local and EU officials to deal with them. This is another *direct* result of religious-based conflict out of control, and we can see it in no other light. It is not possible at this point to statistically place a money figure on its cost; or to describe the cost in human lives or human misery as its result. But clearly it is certainly massive.

### U.S.A.

“**R**eligious-based conflict comes to America”. This should have been a newspaper headline in New York after the various attacks against America on September 11, 2001, instead, only shock and dismay pervaded. But it was too early. Long-time readers will

recall that we, as a voice in the wilderness then, described these attacks in our Fall, 2001 Center Update as a clear example of religious-based conflict. Again, it should have been the headline in Fort Hood, Texas after the shooting there in 2009. The official description then was “workplace violence” - though it was whispered that there were religious complications. And, there was no such headline after the Boston, Massachusetts bombings at a Marathon event in 2013, though more and more agreed that this was religious-based conflict in its basic form.

Clearly, the media in (at least) America have been behind the power curve, slow to react to the obvious because of, among other things, political correct rationale, even when the few non-biased commentators had no trouble seeing these later events for what they were. Conclusion: America (and, hopefully the world) is slowly moving forward in its perception and understanding of what religious-based conflict is and how it is now beginning to affect (not only) the United States directly. A good first step.

### Somalia

Al Shabaab, an offspring of al Qaeda, has been designated a jihadist terrorist organization by several countries, including the United States. It has waged a long insurgency in Somalia. Its goal is to turn Somalia into an “ISIS-like” country, driving out or executing all who would not follow their radical Islamic beliefs. Recently, it has stepped up hit-and-run raids on remote bases as a tactic to fight the African Union forces seeking to break their insurgency. At least 45 African Union and Somali national army forces died in an al Shabaab raid on their base in southern Somalia in September, and more than 100 troops were unaccounted for. About one half of the troops were Ugandans taking part in the mission to hold a base in Janaale, Somalia. ■

## POTPOURRI

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

### Texas

Recently in May of this year, a grim online warning from a self-described American jihadist said early May’s terror attack in Texas was the work of ISIS and that the terrorist group has scores of “trained soldiers”



positioned in 15 states, awaiting orders to carry out more operations. The warning, which was posted on a file-sharing site, could not be verified, but was signed by Abu Ibrahim al Ameriki. That name matches the moniker of a shadowy American known to have joined a terrorist group in Pakistan several years ago and who has appeared in propaganda videos before.

The chilling threat named five of the states where it is claimed that ISIS has terror cells in place. "Out of our some 71 trained soldiers 23 have signed up for missions like this one, we are increasing in number," read the warning. "Of the 15 states, 5 we will name some... Virginia, Maryland, Illinois, California, and Michigan." ■

## COMMENTS FROM OUR READERS

*"Thank you for your good work!"*

Henrik Lindberg Hansen  
London

NB: We only publish readers' comments and complete names or initials when we have their permission to do so.

## 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. Now that the USA has removed most of its troops from Iraq and is completing 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 and Turkey.

In Afghanistan, for instance, the USA itself continues to spend enormous amounts of dollars a year including military training costs and humanitarian aid. Costs since 2001 total \$712+ billion.

In Iraq costs are again increasing due to the recent and new insertion of "non-combat" troops, advisors and their support as well as new humanitarian aid. Costs since 2001 total \$818+ billion.

The costs of confronting ISIS as of September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 were \$5.8+ billion and are increasing dramatically.

Accordingly, total costs for these actions to the USA alone as of September 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 are \$1,637+ 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 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 costs are for attacking the *effects* of religious-based conflict alone. None of these costs are associated with attacking its *causes*. ■

## ABOUT THE CENTER

What the Center, as a totally independent institution, 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.

**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, 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.



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

**To donate now to either the Center’s Operational Fund or to its Endowment Fund account using your credit card or online bank check, click**

**[HERE](#)**

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**CENTER  
FOR  
REDUCTION OF RELIGIOUS-BASED CONFLICT**

[www.Center2000.org](http://www.Center2000.org)

WHY WE NEED YOUR DONATIONS

1. For reoccurring operational expenses
  - Rent, Overhead, Postage, Publishing of The Center Update, Auto expenses, Insurance, seeking out potential Volunteers and supporters, etc. <sup>1</sup>
2. For travel
  - To perform actual research in the Hotspots of religious-based conflict where feasible
  - To conduct outreach visits to our Volunteers; to learn their problems, train and provide personal support and motivation, etc.
  - To attend conferences, etc. We are invited to conferences and other events throughout the world each year, which because of funding limitations we currently cannot attend
  - To give speeches at schools/universities, etc.
  - To meet w/educational, government and business leaders to promote our work
3. To bring the Center and our mission before the public and governments through personal contact, advertising, etc.
  - In written media
  - On radio, TV
  - Producing and publishing an annual Report summarizing the violence and its costs for the past year - which if widely known - will be astonishing
4. To update and convert the book, *Beyond Tolerance*, to an e-book and publish it
5. To hire analysts, marketing experts, and other staff, etc. to increase our visibility and output
6. To fund our project calculating and analyzing the historical costs of religious-based conflict (see chapter 9 of book, *Beyond Tolerance*)
7. To upgrade our website
8. To build our Endowment Fund to increase our financial security

<sup>1</sup> No officers or trustees receive any salary or other income from the Center. All are Volunteers