“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

The sole and continuous emphasis on attacking only the effects of religious-based conflict is not working! Examples of this failure continue to abound. No matter what we do - or what we have done - the violence coming from religious-based conflict continues unabated, and in many cases is even increasing. Only defending against and attacking the perpetrators of violence after the fact cannot reduce religious-based conflict in the long-term. We know these are dangerous times so we must change directions. We must spend more time, money and effort attacking the causes of religious-based conflict not only its effects, and we must start NOW if we are really serious about reducing this violence and its associated massive costs.

Today religious-based conflict is principally, though certainly not entirely, directed against Christians in the world. In past times it has been predominantly against Jews and at other times against Muslims and Hindus, to name a few. In other words, at one time or another in history, religious-based conflict and violence has been carried out against ALL religions and by individuals and groups on behalf of ALL religions.

Accordingly, here are the steps governments as well as their citizens must take to genuinely begin to reduce this religious-based conflict and violence:

◊ Government leaders - at all levels - must first understand and accept that, until we begin to attack the underlying cause of this violence, we cannot really reduce it. This underlying cause is a culture of belief that others cannot have a faith different from theirs. They believe that violence, in all forms, is an acceptable way to enforce this belief. That is, they emphasize their religious differences to the extreme. This belief is the result of education either at home or at educational institutions. Thus, the first step to solving this, as with all problems, is to recognize that the problem exists,

◊ The solution itself is, for not only the USA but all nations, to begin - through their leaders and their educational institutions - to publicize and teach this recognition and importantly emphasize the religious similarities that all religions have, rather than only recognizing their differences. They must begin to de-emphasize religious-differences and concentrate on explaining their similarities, in order to reduce the divisiveness caused by the former. It must be a national effort, led from the highest levels of government.

◊ When leaders of a nation such as the USA proclaim this publicly to the rest of the world, they will listen. When US leaders show results of this approach in the USA other countries notice. A worthy example is smoking. Some years ago the USA took the lead in not only showing why smoking should be reduced, but itself reduced smoking by medical persuasion, laws and regulations. Many other countries in the world recognized its benefits and have followed suit, with the result that smoking in these countries as well has been substantially reduced.

◊ With national leaders taking the above approach, local
leaders, citizens and particularly educational institutions will begin to take similar action as well.

◇ Result: A culture change and a reduction of religious-based conflict and violence in the world! Not today or tomorrow but with certainty.

Acknowledging religious-based conflict and its resulting violence, and following the above steps to reduce it are easy actions that every government, every company, every organization as well as every person can take. When this is put together it will add up to a real change from this culture of hate and violence which we now experience. As Dante Alighieri wrote in his book, *Divine Comedy*: “In dangerous times, there is no sin greater than inaction.” We must act now!

Terry O. Trowbridge

## HOTSPOTS

### England

Violence and crimes in England and Wales increased by 40 percent in the past year, according to a report from England’s Home Office. Some 52 percent of these crimes were directed at specific religious groups. 2,965 were directed at Muslims, and 12 percent, or 672, were directed at Jews, - the most commonly targeted groups - according to the report for 2017-18, which uses official police figures. These numbers on religious-based crime represented the sharpest rise, from 5,949 in 2016-17. There were a total of 94,098 hate crime offenses in that period, an increase of 17 percent over the previous year.

### Cameroon

Cameroon is fighting another war besides its long-running civil war - this one is a religious-based war against Islamist extremists in the region who are attempting to take over that country. In the north, the USA has been providing Cameroon with military equipment to battle Boko Haram who have been causing terror and violence in neighboring Nigeria for decades.

### Syria

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) fighters seized 36 women and children during simultaneous attacks on the southeastern province of Sweida last October. The London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights stated that 20 women and 16 children were kidnapped from al-Shobki village in Sweida during these attacks. The ambush by ISIS militants left at least 221 people dead. ISIS sent photos of some of the kidnapped women to their families, most of them from the minority Druze sect which is prevalent in Sweida. ISIS attackers had detonated suicide bombs in Sweida city as well as in villages to the north and east, while others shot and stabbed residents. A total of 139 civilians were among more than 221 people killed. More than 350,000 people have been killed since Syria's conflict erupted in 2011.

## POTPOURRI

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

### The World

According to a German *Heidelberger Institut für Internationale Konfliktforschung* study issued in March of this year there were 222 major conflicts in the world in 2017, the most recent year studied. This study further stated that the vast majority of these conflicts were religious-based. Sad, but true.

## 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.

In the past we have described the financial costs to the United States alone of the Iraq and Afghan conflicts

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as they continued to accrue. Since 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, other parts of the Middle East and Africa as well.

In Afghanistan, for instance the USA, even though their military itself continues to exit, spends enormous amounts of dollars a year for such things as training costs of the Afghan military as well as humanitarian aid. Costs since 2001 total $824+ 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 the initiation of more and more air activity and humanitarian aid. Costs since 2001 total $890+ billion.

The costs of confronting ISIS alone, (not the only instigator of religious-based conflict and violence) and not including Syria or African countries, are $17+ billion a year and are increasing dramatically each month.

Accordingly, total costs for combating religious-based conflict to the USA alone since 2001 are $4.678 trillion, not including the ensuing interest on US debt because of these expenditures of an additional $636+ million.

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 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**

What the Center, as a totally independent charity, 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!

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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