

# Combating Violent Extremism

**The Lahore  
Ahmadiyya Movement  
Working for Peace in the  
World.**

*[This article is a transcript of a talk delivered by the Editor of the Light Magazine, USA, Fazeel S Khan Esq. at the First Community Church in Columbus, Ohio, USA in December 2015. Both the clergy and*



*members of the church have been friends of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Islamic Society (LAIS) for many years and members of LAIS have spoken at the church on numerous occasions. At this particular event, the Editor took the opportunity to speak about ‘how attacking the ideologies upon which Muslim extremists based their cause is central to successfully combating their violent extremist acts.’ In addition, the purpose and objective of the Ahmadiyya Movement was also relayed, with emphasis supplied on the teachings of the Founder of the Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that poignantly address the extremist ideologies that we see causing havoc in the world today. Finally, the practical work*

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*performed by LAIS in pursuit of the objective of reclaiming the religion of Islam from extremists was discussed.]*

Good morning, everyone. It is always a pleasure to be with you. I was thinking about what I could talk about today. There is certainly no shortage of controversies concerning Muslims and the religion of Islam that could be discussed. I decided to keep it short so that we have more time for questions and answers.

I would like to share with you some thoughts on what is now quite commonly understood as a *critical component* to addressing the problem of violent extremism among some Muslims; and that is, attacking the *ideology* that Muslim extremists promote and upon which Muslim terrorists base their criminal actions. This is something that I have been speaking about for some time now; I actually made the case for this in my Torch Club presentation many years ago.

This ‘war on terror’ we are engaged in is not something that can be won on the battlefield. Rather, it requires the eradication of the theological notions that call for violence against others as a sacred duty and promotes an ‘us vs. them’ worldview. This extremist ideology needs to be delegitimized. For example, the Klu Klux Klan claims to be a Christian organization, but no person who seriously wants to learn about Christianity and live a Christian life goes to the KKK to learn about the faith. And this is what needs to be done with groups like ISIS – they need to be relegated to the status comparable to fringe groups like the KKK that are dismissed and mocked by the mainstream. And this task can only be achieved by Muslims.

Now, even though every Muslim organization in the U.S. consistently condemns terrorism in all its forms, no doubt, condemnation isn’t enough. Muslims cannot simply say ‘these terrorists don’t represent all

Muslims’ or ‘Islam is a religion of peace.’ Rather, they need to systematically address the theological arguments groups like ISIS make in support of their cause. And I’d like to share with you some information about what the Islamic organization I belong to, of which I am the Secretary, is doing in this effort.

This organization, the Ahmadiyya Movement, was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who lived in a small village named Qadian in the Indian subcontinent, in 1889 (about 127 years ago).

There is a prophecy made by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) that at the beginning of every century, there would be a person who would arise among his followers who would be a ‘*mujaddid*’ (or ‘spiritual reformer’). Mirza Ghulam Ahmad claimed to be the *mujaddid* (or Reformer) of this past century. Now, the role of a *mujjadid* is simply to revive the faith – that is, to provide guidance in

terms of interpretation and understanding of religion and serve as a model for how to achieve spiritual development in the contemporary era. And this is what Mirza Ghulam Ahmad focused his mission on – explaining deep spiritual insights about the Islamic faith and rebutting the extremist ideologies that were being promoted by some. He emphasized the Islamic principles of religious tolerance and the beauty in diversity and pluralism; for example, he wrote:

Friends, ponder for God’s sake, and say whether such beliefs are acceptable to reason, whether there is anything in human conscience which responds to them. I cannot see how a rational being can believe, on the one hand, that God is the Lord of the whole universe, and yet say, on the other, that He has withdrawn His fostership and Care from the greater part of the world, and that His love

and mercy is confined to one people and one country.

He goes on to write:

Our God has not withheld His bounty from any people. The powers and faculties which He bestowed on the ancient peoples of India, have also been bestowed on the Arabs, the Persians, the Syrians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Europeans and the Americans. For all of them, the earth of God serves as a floor, and for all of them His sun, moon, and stars give light ... All of them derive benefit from the air, water, fire, earth and other things created by God, and all of them use the produce of the earth ... These liberal ways of God teach us that we also should do good to all mankind, and should not be narrow-minded, nor limit our sympathy (for anyone).

He specifically called out to the extremist religious personalities who were preaching a distorted and

perverted interpretation of the concept of '*jihad*'; and called attention to the true character of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a mercy and blessing to mankind, not a proponent of warfare, as many have tried to portray him as.

For example, he wrote the following, which seems to be quite prophetic of the condition of some Muslims we see today:

The ignorant religious leaders have greatly deceived the masses and declared acts of brutality, cruelty and inhumanity to be the key to attaining paradise. Is it a virtuous deed that there is a man going about in the market place, we have no connection with him so much so that we don't know his name and he doesn't know ours, but despite this he is shot at with the intention to kill him? Is this religious behaviour?

Contrast this with those pious early Muslims whom God instructed in Makkah not to

respond with violence even if they were cut to pieces. Alas, today the religious leaders have forgotten all those events, and think that to fire a gun at an innocent man constitutes Islam. The ignorant ones have merely heard the word ‘jihad’ and are using it as a pretext and cover for satisfying their own selfish ends, or purely out of fanaticism and lunacy are perpetrating bloodshed.

He named the Movement ‘Ahmadiyya’ after the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s other name ‘Ahmad’, which signifies one who is patient and shows perseverance in times of trials (This is a reflection of the period of the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s life in Mecca in which he and the early Muslims patiently bore the suffering of severe persecution).

Members of this Movement pledge to revive this example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s character and promote the spiritual

basis of the Islamic faith to others. As Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explained:

Those who join my army, I order them to give up these ideas [of a jihad of war], and to purify their hearts, develop and nurture their feelings of mercy towards all humankind and be helpers of those in distress and suffering. **They should spread peace on earth**, as this is how their religion will spread.

Today we hear calls for a Gandhi or a Martin Luther King or a Nelson Mandela of the Muslim world – yet many are unaware that this non-violent movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was established over a century ago. And there is a lot of work being done today to carry on this legacy and bring about change in parts of the world where Muslims may be susceptible to extremist propaganda. We have produced a library of literature that rebuts the beliefs promoted by extremists. This literature is carried by all the major

bookstores in the US, and many universities use them as text books. But what we also do is have these books translated into different languages and placed into the hands of native populations around the world, so that people have an opportunity to learn about their religion for themselves and not rely on some politically-motivated cleric telling them what their religion is about.



**The Late Sheikh Tantawi, Head of Al Azhar University, Cairo, signing the foreword he wrote to the book 'The Religion of Islam' by Maulana Muhammad Ali of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement.**

We have also collaborated with Al Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt (regarded as the premier Islamic educational institution in the world) to have these works

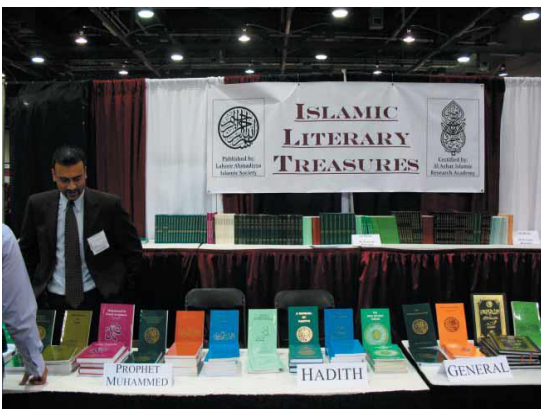
translated into Arabic. We have received certifications for these publications from Al Azhar, which provides the necessary stamp of approval to give legitimacy to the interpretations and rebuttals contained in our literature. And finally, we partnered with like-minded Muslim leaders and organizations in the Arab world to help disseminate these publications to the masses. Tens of thousands of copies of our literature have been distributed, for free, in Egypt alone. And we are currently working with other governments to have our literature provided to all of the clerics who are officially licensed as religious teachers. Seventy thousand copies of our Russian translation and commentary of the Holy Quran has been distributed in Central Asian countries. Just this past September we held a seminar in Istanbul for this purpose, and I will be attending another conference in Cairo next month to help further these efforts.

I'm trying my best to get all of the



**Thousands of copies of the Holy Quran delivered free to Russia and Asia**

work that requires international travel done before the next election, perchance a certain celebrity becomes president and I may not be allowed back into the country ... [laughter]. But in all seriousness, all of this work to counter these extremist ideologies and combat the very foundation of the terrorists' propaganda is being done by American Muslims, many of whom



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(like ourselves) are from right here in central Ohio. I will end here. I thank you for your attention, and I would love to take some questions now.



**We strongly condemn all forms of human rights abuses; the wanton abuse of the environment and the rest of God's creation. We especially condemn, from the top of our voices, the ruthless killings of all innocent parties in the name of Religion or State!**

The Good News

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