

De-radicalization Conference Remarks (as prepared)
USAID Assistant Administrator Paige Alexander
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Minister Messahel, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen; it is a distinct pleasure to be able to lead the United States Delegation to the sixth in a series of regional and thematic meetings building on the successful February White House Summit to Counter Violent Extremism. On behalf of Secretary Kerry, I would like to thank the Government of Algeria, and Minister Messahel in particular, for your leadership in hosting this important conference... as we work together to build a global partnership against violent extremism.

Algeria is a country with a particularly long and hard-won experience in deradicalization and reintegration. While the challenge of extremism is not new, it is evolving. In fact, 9 Algerian soldiers paid with their lives in Ain Defla this weekend. We honor their sacrifice. We see a growing Da'esh presence and attempts to establish footholds across North and West Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasus, South and Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. Recent attacks from Tunisia to Kuwait, France to Denmark, and in Kenya, Nigeria and Yemen remind us of the diverse threat of terrorist groups that require our unwavering attention and that no region, no country, no community is immune to this threat. Indeed, the United States also has suffered from homegrown violent extremism in a variety of forms.

To meet this challenge, President Obama convened more than 300 participants from national and local governments, civil society, the private sector, and the United Nations, and other multilateral bodies at the White House Summit in February to build an international movement to counter violent extremism.

Together, this diverse group generated new, innovative ideas and programs, and committed to mobilize new resources and build new partnerships.

They outlined an ambitious action agenda across a wide range of topics to put this new approach into practice. Algeria and other governments volunteered in February to host follow-on regional and thematic CVE summits and other meetings. These activities are expanding the number of government and non-governmental stakeholders in this global movement as we each contribute our expertise and resources to address the challenges of violent extremism.

This fall, leaders will reconvene in New York to report on the success of this global effort and announce the progress they have made.

In the meetings since February, a number of core themes have emerged.

First, we should work together to better understand threats at the local and regional level and what leads individuals to radicalize and support terrorist groups. Because the underlying drivers are so context-specific, this involves promoting local research, analysis, and information sharing on the drivers of violent extremism in all of its forms and on how best to counter them.

Second, civil society, particularly youth, community and religious leaders, women, and victims, have a critical role to play, both independently and in collaboration with governments, in addressing the drivers of violent extremism. To intervene and disrupt the cycle of radicalization, whole-of-community solutions and action plans are critical. And we should tap the talents of all communities; this threat is too serious to leave any community or group behind. I note that the

United States has included members of civil society in our official delegation to this conference. I am proud to be joined by my non-governmental partners here in Algiers and I am very much looking forward to having them share their unique perspectives and experiences.

In order to ensure continued engagement at the grassroots level, the United States is encouraging the development of regional CVE-focused, youth-driven civil society networks. Such networks should be a partnership between government and civil society, with some catalytic funding and technical support from international donors. The networks would not only serve as fora for dialogue, but also as platforms for follow up to Summit-generated ideas and initiatives. A European Youth Network against Violent Extremism was launched at the Oslo Summit, and a Southeast Asian network was announced at the Sydney Summit... and we look forward to working with partners to develop youth-focused regional platforms in other regions.

Third, we need to reaffirm our core values and strengthen civil rights protections for all communities, including members of religious and ethnic minorities. This means strengthening community and police, and community and security force relations on the basis of respect for human rights and the utilization of law enforcement best practices. Human rights abuses and violations are among the most significant drivers of violent extremism.

Fourth, we should work to counter the corrosive messages of violent extremists and push back with narratives that amplify authentic and credible voices. To do this, we should use strategic communications and harness the power and reach of

social media to challenge violent extremists' messaging through positive alternative narratives, and, in turn, delegitimize violent extremist ideologies.

And finally, we need to expand social services and provide educational and economic opportunities—particularly for marginalized populations and youth. Governments should be responsive to the needs of their most vulnerable citizens. We should ensure these groups have a stake in and feel a part of their communities by expanding programs that empower youth and other young leaders, promote entrepreneurship and economic opportunity, and enhance civic education and the culture of tolerance and non-violence.

There is increasing recognition by government and non-government actors alike that countering violent extremism is most successful when governments and the community work in partnership to support innovative programs that address various underlying drivers of violent extremism. Local actors—municipal governments, families, neighbors, faith leaders—play a vital role in partnership with national governments. And the inclusion of women and youth across national governments, security services, local actors, and civil society, will be essential to our success.

We have already seen many creative, innovative approaches, such as efforts to foster more constructive engagement between law enforcement and the communities they are meant to serve. We have also seen programs that promote democratic values and civic engagement among young men in communities where the government's presence is limited and the risk of recruitment for violent activities is high. We have witnessed community leaders join together to promote inter-religious dialogue among at-risk youth to counter violent extremist ideologies

and narratives. And we have seen the essential role that local communities play in not only identifying early signs of radicalization to violence, but also in reintegrating and rehabilitating those that have disavowed violence.

In our view, these types of community-based initiatives must be expanded, and new ones must be developed and become an integral component of inclusive national CVE strategies across this region and beyond. CVE strategies should include both national and local government input, and involve law enforcement, health and social service workers, youth, women, religious and other civil society leaders, as well as private sector representatives. And, of course, as with so many issues in this region, closer regional cooperation on CVE issues—both among governments and civil society—is essential to countering today’s threats and also in preventing violent extremist groups from radicalizing, recruiting, or inspiring others to violence.

Governments have a role to play in addressing underlying grievances by not tolerating incompetence, corruption, or the abuse of human rights. As Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon remarked at the Summit in February, “governments should not use the fight against terrorism and extremism as a pretext to attack one's critics. Extremists deliberately seek to incite such overreactions, and we must not fall into those traps.”

Government does not just mean national authorities, of course. Local government is at the front-line in both identifying early signs of radicalization and partnering with communities to counter it. Cities and other sub-national actors are vital to this effort, and their contributions to CVE are growing every month. To support their efforts, we are looking forward to the launch of a ‘Strong Cities Network’ in

September in New York. The network will provide a global platform to support cities and other sub-national entities in developing effective programs and practices to address violent extremism in partnership with communities, as well as facilitate the mutual learning and exchange of information between local governments and local communities on prevention. We highly encourage relevant cities and other sub-national entities from across this and other regions to join this new platform.

We welcome the opportunity over the next two days to focus on deradicalization in all its aspects. We look forward to learning what approaches have worked—and perhaps which have failed. A wide range of countries have experience in designing and implementing effective de-radicalization policies and programs—many of these countries are represented here today. Capturing this compendium of experience in a handbook of sorts could help socialize the best practices and inform others with an interest in refining existing or developing new initiatives in this space—whether led by governments, civil society, the private sector, or multilateral organizations.

We should leave this Meeting with new, creative, tangible ideas for achieving our shared goal of countering the violent extremists who threaten us all. We should also leave with a renewed commitment to implementation and the understanding that only together, in partnership, can we achieve this comprehensive agenda. There is no single way forward, and no one government or organization has all the good ideas. I am confident that with the energy and talent gathered in this room, we can—over the course of the next 48 hours—take a significant step forward. Thank you again to the Government of Algeria for bringing us together and to all those gathered here for participating in this important discussion.