

The Human Face of Radicalization –

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Kjell Skylstad⁺ Editor in Chief

How can we defuse our urban time bombs in a time of increasing threats of urban violence and terrorism? Is stricter police and military surveillance and severe legislation our only protective weapons? How can we prevent our urban youth from falling prey to brainwashing extremists promising honor and fortune in the service of criminal regimes home and abroad?

In her new documentary *Jihad* the award winning Pakistani-Norwegian documentary filmmaker and founder of Fuuse – Deeyah Khan sought to seek out and engage with the threat of radicalization of young Muslims living in England and France.

“While filming Fuuse’s new documentary *Jihad*, I spent over two years working with men and women who had been part of extremist organizations and found their personal journeys into violent extremism were often triggered by vulnerabilities such as life crises, disengagement, disagreements with family, and unfulfilled ambitions. I found that just as cults and gangs provide a sense of purpose and camaraderie, so does the religious extremism address the psychological and emotional needs of our young people. We must ask why the personal and emotional needs of a minority have been unfulfilled in such a way as to leave them vulnerable to radicalization and extremism”

⁺ Dr. Kjell Skylstad, Professor Emeritus, University of Oslo, Department of Musicology, Norway.

Among the Forum speakers was Alyas Karmani, who left the world of reactionary Islam to become an Imam and Co-Director of STREET-UK, providing violence prevention counseling, tackling criminality gang involvement, sexual violence, social exclusion and violent extremism.

Among the woman speakers was Yasmin Mulbocus, a former recruit of a banned extremist group in the UK, who recently has worked her way back into society and assisting local governments in providing workshops and training to establish resilience against violent extremism. She now works at an organization which focuses on dissuading young people from joining extremist groups like IS.

Among the invited specialists and researchers there was a unanimous opinion about the social background for extremism and the way to counteract its disastrous effects. Brainwashing is often the result of cracks in the surrounding social and political system, making youth think of themselves as losers. Violent political movements move in, promising to lift youth up, exploiting young men's masculine idealization of bravery and both genders thirst for adventure. With superior psychological intuition IS moves in with its recruiters and social media messages addressing each individual personally, promising a way from humiliation to dignity. In the final end violence is seen as a matter of moral virtue, as a debt owed to society for taking care, and as a way to eternal glory.

This is the human face of radicalization. Do we have the vision, will and resources to form the partnerships needed to respond through humanizing our own society?