

Strategies dealing with radicalisation and extremism in QLD

A/Prof Mohamad Abdalla

Griffith University

m.abdalla@griffith.edu.au

Introduction

- QLD Muslim community:
 - Population size (~ 45,000 much less than VIC & NSW)
 - Ethnic diversity (South African, Fijian, Bosnian, Indian/Pakistani, Arab)
 - Educational backgrounds
 - Professional occupations
 - Islamic organisations (CIQ, ICQ, IWAQ, IMAQ, MCF, Al-Nisa, AMARAH, UMB, Revival etc.)
 - Number of Mosques (19) + Musalas (~10)

QLD terrorism cases

- Dr Mohamad Hanif?
- Others? (reported suicide bombing)

Why no violent extremism or radicalisation in QLD?

- Perhaps lucky!
- Difficult to ascertain contributing factors
- But we can perhaps make the following assumptions:



Possible Factors

1. **Pro-active measures post 9/11 & burning of Kuraby Mosque**
2. **Preventative measures**
3. **Interventionist measures**
4. **Empirical research**



Possible positive contributing factors



Demography

- **South African Muslims in Brisbane are wealthy business people, medical doctors and professionals.**
- Prominent size of highly educated Muslims, especially medical doctors.
- **Large Muslim communities in rural areas that have a long-standing presence in QLD, such as the Albanian Muslims of Mareeba in far North Queensland; the Rane Family, the Deen Family.**

Pro-Active approach

- **Examples:**

- Burning of the Kuraby Masjid
- Community funded GIRU (\$600,000):
 1. Graduates who understand both contexts
 2. Research into relevant contextual areas
 3. Public relations, etc.
- Immediately following the Cronulla riots in Sydney 2005.
- Working with groups with extreme views (via meetings, engagement, appointing the 'right' Imam to offer classes...example of Algerian Imams working with Bosnians).

Unified Media Voice

- Since 9/11, deliberate strategy to have appropriate persons to represent the community:
 - **Achieved approval of community**
 - **Sought to calm tensions**
 - **Offer a voice of reason**
 - **Prevent radical representation**
 - **Media training**

Community Workshops

- **De-radicalisation** workshop (ICQ funded by Attorney General's office, assisted by NCEIS) – across QLD & targeting youth
- **Democracy** Workshops (ICQ, Crescents of Brisbane and AMARAH)
- **Leadership training** (all of above supported by major organisations)
- **Media training** for Imams and leaders

Engaging youth with QLD Police

- Action taken immediately after:
 1. The Cronulla riots
 2. The violent protests in Sydney against film
 3. Local PLO

Khutbas addressing sensitive topics

- United voice & constant education by Imams to address sensitive topics such as:
 1. Islam and democracy (after convert Ibrahim-Conlon appeared on Sixty Minutes and Today Tonight condemning democracy)
 2. Violent extremism and Islam (after the foiled terrorist events in VIC)
 3. Australian Muslim identity (**see sample**)
 4. The Arab Spring
 5. The plight of the Palestinians, etc.

CIQ's approach

- Council of Imams of QLD responds collectively and with a united voice to important and sensitive issues:
 - The 'Aqida Watch Website
 - Initiating meeting with Director of ASIO
 - Responding collectively to violent extremist ideology
 - Open to community participations at CIQ meetings

Academic research with active community involvement

- GIRU – supported and funded by community.
- Research in sensitive fields:
 - i. **Leadership in Aust. Islamic Organisations and Radicalisation among Youth** (ARC application)
 - ii. **The Debate on Violent Extremism: Voices of QLD Muslim Youth**
 - iii. **IPV among Australian Muslim community – Completed PhD** (publication on IPV and Islam)
 - iv. **Investigating violent radicalisation amongst Muslim adolescents: Prevalence and risk factors (PhD)**
 - v. **Synthesis between Prophetic pedagogy and productive pedagogy** (for Islamic schools and madrassas) – PhD
 - vi. **Research paper ‘Sacred Law in Secular Land: The Extent to which a Muslim is Obligated to Follow Sharia in Australia’**

No answers without evidence

- All projects include key members of community and give them ownership (meetings; discussions; consultation; feedback).
- Findings provide empirical evidence on extent of the problem allowing us to deal with it more effectively.
 - Working papers for Imams and social workers



Thank you

