



**KCSS**  
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies



# **Handbook Contextualizing Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Kosovo**

March 2023

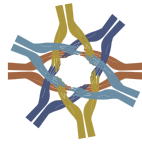


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# **HANDBOOK CONTEXTUALIZING TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN KOSOVO**

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# INTRODUCTION

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The following analysis is a summary of findings put together through a decade of research by the Kosovar Center for Security Studies and experts that have looked into radicalization in Kosovo through various programs aimed at identifying the drivers that pushed the country's citizens to join terrorist organizations in the Middle East and to embrace extremist causes. This summary aims to contextualize the phenomenon of the so-called "foreign fighters" that joined the terrorist organization "The Islamic State" and other groups involved in the battlefields of Syria and Iraq, who represented a clear and present danger for Kosovo's security institutions.<sup>1</sup>

Although every case is specific, the goal of this brief analysis is to offer an accurate framework on the individual and collective motives that drove a fraction of Kosovo's citizens to join the terrorist organizations in the Middle East. A discussion of the drivers is key to understand the context in which to situate the rehabilitation and the reintegration of Kosovo citizens that were repatriated from the conflict zones.

In addition to its focus on the Islamist radicalization that leads to violent extremism, this short manual offers definitions and the typologies of violent extremism and radicalization that represent a challenge for Kosovo's national security. Due to the lack of one single international practice that standardizes the rehabilitation and reintegration of radicalized individuals, the manual offers a summary of best practices for the needs of the Kosovo Probation Service staff. Lastly, the manual defines key terms and notions to facilitate the KPS and its personnel's understanding and communication with the radicalized individuals under their supervision. These definitions of terms and norms will also aid the probation staff's objectivity in dealing with the cases of radicalized individuals through the process of rehabilitation and reintegration. They will also assist in preventing stigmatization and unintended discrimination by the probation staff of those that have served prison sentences on terrorism convictions.

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<sup>1</sup> Perteshi, Skender. 2018. "Beyond Triggers: New Threats of Violent Extremism in Kosovo," Kosovar Center for Security Studies [https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng\\_611603.pdf](https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_611603.pdf)

# 1. THE ORIGINS OF RADICALIZATION AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN KOSOVO

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In the years between 2012 and 2016, hundreds of Kosovo citizens joined terrorist organizations and embraced extremist causes in the Middle East. Initially, the majority of those individuals joined Islamist organizations, such as the terrorist group “al Fateh al Sham,” “DAESH” and others, that fought the dictatorial Syrian regime as part of the developments related to the “Arab Spring.” However, once the war in Syria degenerated, the majority of the Kosovo citizens joined the ranks of the “Islamic State,” the terrorist organization that fought to establish the Islamic “Caliphate,” which for a period of time, controlled parts of Syria and Iraq.

The phenomenon of the so-called “foreign fighters” attracted international attention and that of scholars who tried to understand the context of its occurrence given Kosovo’s pro-Western sentiment. In the studies conducted on violent extremism in Kosovo, the main emphasis is placed on the external Islamist influence, which was not present in Kosovo before the 1998-1999 war.<sup>2</sup> Theoretically, the goal of this Islamist influence was to challenge the traditional co-existence between the secular state and religion by placing them in direct competition for supremacy.

Practically, in Kosovo this influence has sought to polarize and divide the country’s Muslim followers by advocating violent extremism as a means to achieve its political goal. In their ideological and political vision, these influences have encouraged the recruitment of foreign fighters and their enlistment in support of extremist aspirations in an effort to include Kosovo in the so-called “Islamic Ummah,” an imaginary concept and space that the leaders of the Islamic State envisaged as a territorial unit that unites the lands inhabited by Muslim majority populations. In their doctrine, the Islamic faith, interpreted by the IS leaders, would be the common identity denominator and the Islamic dogma a way of life. “The Islamic Caliphate” was meant as the fulfillment of the territorial manifestation of this ideological concept.<sup>3</sup>

The origins of this ideological concept in Kosovo are traced to leaders and influencers that have mainly challenged the hierarchy of the Islamic Community, which acts as the ultimate official authority in Kosovo, and its spread in regions

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2 Kursani, Shpend. 2015. “Report Inquiring into the Causes and Consequences of Kosovo Citizens’ Involvement as Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq.” Kosovar Center for Security Studies. <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/raport-per-shkaqet-dhe-pasojat-e-perfshierjes-se-qytetareve-te-kosoves-si-luftetare-te-huaj-ne-siri-dhe-irak>

3 Kraja, Garentina. 2017. “The Islamic State Narrative in Kosovo, deconstructed one story at a time.” Kosovar Center for Security Studies. <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/the-islamic-state-narrative-in-kosovo-deconstructed-one-story-at-a-time>

of Kosovo. The genesis of this problem coincides with the power struggle for dominance between various strands of these influences inside this institution, as exponents of this association gradually gain more ground and are more vocal in the public sphere in the post war Kosovo.<sup>4</sup> Some of these developments are aided by the advent of democracy in Kosovo and the advancement of individual freedoms such as the freedom of choice, freedom of speech and the right to association, and enabled by the widespread use of internet in Kosovo and the ever-changing media landscape that adapted to the news consumption habits of its audience.<sup>5</sup> These changes in Kosovo over the last two decades are some of the structural factors that indirectly assisted the penetration and the impact of the external radical influence into Kosovo, enabled the unfiltered and unmediated communication between IS advocates and their sympathizers in Kosovo despite their lack of credentials in religious teaching or the context of the wars in the Middle East. Such context has enabled the "Islamic State" to indoctrinate and recruit their members through their propaganda online and social media, without the need to be tied geographically to a certain territory.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these structural factors that indirectly enabled the spread of violent extremism in Kosovo, there were another set of internal factors that influenced the rise of this phenomenon. In the period between 2012-2016, authorities in Kosovo identified dozens of venues that acted like unauthorized mosques, which operated without a license from the Islamic Association of Kosovo (BIK) and which often simultaneously or in competition with imams served the devout at the community level. El-Kudus Mosque in Gjilan and the makeshift mosque in the Prishtina neighborhood of Dardania were such examples. By 2012 the number of these illegal venues had reached 100, and despite their denunciation by BIK to Kosovo authorities, they continued their activities unhindered.<sup>7</sup> A considerable number of Kosovo "foreign fighters" was indoctrinated and recruited to join the ranks of terrorist organizations in the Middle East in these venues by individuals who played the role of the unauthorized imams, but also by religious leaders that in the "Islamic State" saw an opportunity to expand their influence among

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4 Jakupi, Rudinë and Garentina Kraja. 2018. "Accounting for the Difference: Vulnerability and Resilience to Violent Extremism in Kosovo. Country Report 3." Berlin/Prishtina. Berghof Foundation and Kosovar Center for Security Studies [https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/CTR\\_CaseStudy3\\_kosovo\\_ENG\\_574166.pdf](https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/CTR_CaseStudy3_kosovo_ENG_574166.pdf)

5 Kraja, Garentina. 2021. "Cultural Drivers of Radicalization in Kosovo." D.Rad: DeRadicalization in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate and Kosovar Center for Security Studies. <https://dradproject.com/?publications-cultural-drivers-of-radicalisation-in-kosovo>

6 Shtuni, Adrian. 2016. "Dynamics of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo." Washington: US Institute of Peace, Special Report 397, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR397-Dynamics-of-Radicalization-and-Violent-Extremism-in-Kosovo.pdf> and Kelmendi, Vese and Shtat Balaj. 2017. "New Battlegrounds: Extremists groups' activity on social networks in Kosovo, Albania and FYROM." Kosovar Center for Security Studies. <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/fushetetejat-e-reja-aktiviteti-i-grupeve-ekstremiste-ne-rrejetet-soziale-ne-kosove-shqiperi-dhe-maqedoni>.

7 Xharra, Besiana. "Kosova Mbylle Syte para Xhamive Ilegale" (Kosovo Turns a Blind Eye to Illegal Mosques," Balkan Insight, January 12, 2012. <https://balkaninsight.com/2012/01/12/kosovo-turns-blind-eye-to-illegal-mosques/>



the devout Muslims in Kosovo.<sup>8</sup>

Alongside these structural factors and the specific circumstances of Kosovo as a society in transition, several scholars cited a series of internal factors such as the lack of government control over its territory, clientelism and corruption that reserves the overall societal rewards for a specific social group close to the ruling establishment and a widespread disenchantment among specific layers of the society with a new political order that they felt did not represent or hear them.<sup>9</sup> The recruitment of the “Islamic State” in Kosovo was also indirectly assisted by other circumstances such as the close family ties and other characteristics of numerically knit societies.<sup>10</sup> The majority of the recruits are believed to have known each other in the past and about half of them had close familial ties between them.

Other motives that are identified as drivers are mainly the individual factors that may have encouraged the citizens of Kosovo to embrace these extreme agendas. They include, among others, beliefs for which they are called to join terrorist organizations, religiosity, various traumas, severe economic conditions and social exclusion.<sup>11</sup> Researchers have also concluded that a significant part of the radicalized had a criminal record and another part had a superficial religious knowledge which made them prey to the propaganda of the “Islamic State.”<sup>12</sup>

The main purpose of the radical influences that inspired violent extremism was to challenge the democratic order in Kosovo and the construction of the secular state, as defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo.<sup>13</sup> In the IS propaganda on social media networks, Kosovo is portrayed as a country where the Muslim religious identity is suppressed on behalf of the secular state and its state and institutions are at the service of goals identified with Western

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8 Kursani, Shpend. 2015. “Report Inquiring into the Causes and Consequences of Kosovo Citizens’ Involvement as Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq.” Kosovar Center for Security Studies. <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/raport-per-shkaqet-dhe-pasojat-e-perfshierjes-se-qytetareve-te-kosoves-si-luftetare-te-huaj-ne-siri-dhe-irak>

9 Jakupi, Rudine and Garentina Kraja. 2018. “Accounting for the Difference: Vulnerability and Resilience to Violent Extremism in Kosovo. Country Report 3.” Berlin/Prishtina. Berghof Foundation and Kosovar Center for Security Studies. [https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/CTR\\_CaseStudy3\\_kosovo\\_ENG\\_574166.pdf](https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/CTR_CaseStudy3_kosovo_ENG_574166.pdf)

10 Kursani, Shpend. 2018. “Kosovo Report” in Extremism Research Forum/Western Balkans. [https://kosovo.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/erf\\_report\\_kosovo\\_2018.pdf](https://kosovo.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/erf_report_kosovo_2018.pdf)

11 Shtuni, Adrian. 2016. “Dynamics of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kosovo.” Washington: US Institute of Peace, Special Report 397, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR397-Dynamics-of-Radicalization-and-Violent-Extremism-in-Kosovo.pdf>

12 Kursani, Shpend. 2015. “Report Inquiring into the Causes and Consequences of Kosovo Citizens’ Involvement as Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq.” Kosovar Center for Security Studies. <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/raport-per-shkaqet-dhe-pasojat-e-perfshierjes-se-qytetareve-te-kosoves-si-luftetare-te-huaj-ne-siri-dhe-irak>

13 Kraja, Garentina. 2017. “The Islamic State Narrative in Kosovo, deconstructed one story at a time.” Kosovar Center for Security Studies. <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/the-islamic-state-narrative-in-kosovo-deconstructed-one-story-at-a-time>

Christian states.

The danger from the Islamic State in Kosovo has decreased over the years due to the institutional commitment to address this security challenge through law and order and investment in building municipal and social capacities, various programs designed and led by civil society that contributed to the improvement of individual and collective conditions and the awareness of the danger that this phenomenon represents for Kosovo and its citizens.<sup>14</sup>

Kosovo authorities have acted with punitive measures against foreign fighters. In a Kosovo-wide operation in Kosovo in 2014, the authorities arrested 80 individuals, who allegedly financed and supported the Islamic State in Kosovo and recruited 255 foreign fighters from Kosovo on behalf of this organization. These terrorist group members are believed to have traveled to Syria and Iraq along with 148 of their family members. It is estimated that some 405 Kosovo citizens recruited through by the Islamic State have been killed in Syria and Iraq. A total of over 140 foreign fighters have returned to Kosovo<sup>15</sup> and in the meantime, Kosovo has become one of the rare European states that has committed to return and repatriate its citizens from these conflict hotbeds.<sup>16</sup>

Most of the returnees who returned to Kosovo were arrested and subjected to judicial proceedings against them. Some of them have already served their prison sentences, but given the level of danger that these individuals and the cause they supported represent for the national security of Kosovo and its allies, the institutions of Kosovo are obliged to monitor the sensitive process of their rehabilitation and reintegration to their communities.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to police operations, Kosovo's institutions have promulgated the law that prohibits Kosovo's citizens to participated in foreign wars and Kosovo has become part of the International Coalition against Terrorism under the leadership of the United States of America. Authorities have also shut down 16 non-governmental organizations for illegal activities against the constitutional order of Kosovo.<sup>18</sup>

However, the circumstances that enabled radicalization and violent extremism

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14 Qehaja, Florian et al. 2017. "Mapping the State of Play of Institutional and Community Involvement in Countering Violent Extremism in Kosovo," Kosovar Center for Security Studies. <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/mapping-the-state-of-play-of-institutional-and-community-involvement-in-countering-violent-extremism-in-kosovo>

15 Kosovar Center for Security Studies database, 2023

16 Coleman, Julie and Teuta Avdimetaj, 2021. "Kosovo's Experience in Repatriating Former Fighters," Policy brief. International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, <https://www.icct.nl/publication/kosovos-experience-repatriating-former-foreign-fighters>

17 Perteshi, Skender. 2018. "Beyond Triggers: New Threats of Violent Extremism in Kosovo," Kosovar Center for Security Studies. [https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng\\_611603.pdf](https://qkss.org/images/uploads/files/violent-extremism-eng_611603.pdf)

18 Ilazi, R et al. 2022. "Online and offline (de)radicalization in the Balkans, Working Paper 5." PAVE Project Publications. [https://www.pave-project.eu/publications/PAVE\\_870769\\_D5.1\\_publication\\_layout.pdf](https://www.pave-project.eu/publications/PAVE_870769_D5.1_publication_layout.pdf)

in Kosovo and turned Kosovo into a fertile ground for these ideologies, continue to be present. Despite social awareness of the dangers of violent extremism, Kosovo continues to be challenged by numerous economic problems, limited education and employment opportunities, deep polarization, inadequate welfare and fragile institutional infrastructure. Moreover, the communities where the former members of the Islamic State are expected to return are often skeptical and reject them, creating unfavorable circumstances and stigmatization that can lead to the continued radicalization of these individuals.<sup>19</sup> This issue takes on urgency, in particular, in the case of children returned from the conflict zones where they were exposed to the Islamic State and their doctrine. So far, Kosovo's institutions and various organizations have worked with this category and most of them are already attending regular classes in the country's public schools alongside their peers.<sup>20</sup>

Although Kosovo's response to the detention of radicalized individuals was adamant, Kosovo's institutions have since failed to develop strategies for the rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign fighters and their families. Despite the fact that Kosovo's institutions have drawn up a concrete plan to work with the community to help rehabilitate these individuals, the lack of capacity at the local level as well as the lack of coordination between the local and central levels in rehabilitation and reintegration efforts is making it impossible to address the needs of these individuals, risking that they again turn to their old ways to seek help.<sup>21</sup>

Under these circumstances, the return of a significant number of radicalized individuals and violent extremists as well as those who have been exposed to extremist ideologies in Kosovo constitutes an acute and long-term challenge for Kosovo's security institutions, which have a dual mission – that of preventing violent extremism and rehabilitation from violent extremism.

Although violent Islamist extremism has for a longer time been the focus of Kosovo institutions due to the nature of the involvement of Kosovo citizens and the danger that this terrorist organization with global scope had for the national security of Kosovo and its allies, Kosovo like other countries in Europe and elsewhere, it is also endangered by other types and forms of violent extremism.

Far-right extremism has a long history in Kosovo. While the country is not a safe haven for these groups, Serbia's contestation of Kosovo's statehood and

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19 Kelmendi, Vese. 2018. "Kosovo Security Barometer, Special Edition: Citizens Perception and Community Response on Returned Foreign Fighters," Kosovar Center for Security Studies.

20 Perteshi's own notes.

21 Interview with senior local representative from Prizren Municipality. 20 February 2022

its independence is central to the ideology of far right extremist groups with regional – and more recently global – reach.<sup>22</sup>

The imminent challenge for Kosovo's national security is the shared narrative and the ideology of the far right extremist groups with the mainstream political actors in Serbia and Russia<sup>23</sup> and the respective national orthodox churches of these Slavic countries that places the contest over Kosovo as a key ideological battle. For the most part, the far right extremist narrative describes the contestation over Kosovo in terms of the theory of clash of civilizations between Islam and Orthodox Christianity, and claims Kosovo as "Serbia's Jerusalem."

Far right groups with such ties and ideology were present in the region and in Kosovo since the 90s wars of former Yugoslavia, but they have since reemerged and gained a new lifeline through Russia's sponsorship since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. As Russia expanded and recalibrated its malign influence in the Western Balkans in a bid to thwart the region's accession prospects into NATO and the EU, it bolstered such groups and exploited anti-Western narratives over the 1999 military intervention in Kosovo to stop Serbia's ethnic cleansing campaign. Groups like Night Wolves, which have direct links to Russia's President Putin, have maintained a presence in Bosnia and their reach has expanded to northern Kosovo, where the authority of the country's institutions has been repeatedly challenged.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the far right extremist organizations have gained momentum. They have created ties with each other, sought public office in Serbia and are part of public institutions in Republika Srpska and possibly in Kosovo. These organizations are suspected of ties to organized crime and corruption<sup>24</sup> and have become hubs of recruitment of Serb recruits and mercenaries raised across the Balkans to fight alongside Russians in Ukraine.

Far right extremist organizations are particularly active on social media and often bolstered by Russian or pro Russian media, which publish prominently in Serbia and amplify the Russian and Serbian propaganda and disinformation reaching Serbian communities across the region.

Prominent among these groups is the paramilitary Russian formation Wagner, which has established an official presence in Serbia and reportedly has ties with prominent Serbian leaders, including those in the intelligence community.<sup>25</sup> Kosovo authorities have recently warned about Wagner's presence in the

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22 Tika, Vera. "Kosovo Issue has Expanded Far Right's Global Reach," *Balkan Insight*, Oct.19, 2022. <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/10/19/kosovo-issue-has-expanded-serbian-far-rights-global-reach/>

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 "Pro-Ukrainian activists in Serbia file criminal complaint against Wagner group," *Reuters*, Jan. 19, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/pro-ukrainian-activists-serbia-file-criminal-complaint-against-wagner-group-2023-01-19/>

northern part of the country, which has been a scene of increased tensions throughout 2022.<sup>26</sup>

### **HERE ARE THE TYPOLOGIES OF EXTREMISM AND THEIR DEFINITIONS:**

**Violent extremism** – The United Nations does not have a common and single definition of violent extremism.<sup>27</sup> This definition is often used alongside terrorism, although ultimately violent extremism is understood as a manifestation of ideologically-based violence. Organizations and individuals who embrace violent extremism as their doctrine incite religious hatred, deepen ideological, political and ethnic divisions to legitimize their actions and justify their goals.<sup>28</sup>

The US defines extremism as an ideology that aims to destroy the values of democracy and impose a totalitarian order. They consider extremism as a political and ideological problem.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines violent extremism as undertaking or supporting actions that “are ideologically motivated or justify the use of violence to achieve social, economic or political goals.”<sup>29</sup>

The Council of Europe defines violent extremism as “behavior which promotes, supports and carries out actions which may lead to terrorism and which aim to defend a certain ideology through the promotion of racial, national, ethnic or religious supremacy” as well as opposition to democratic values and principles.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the Council of Europe considers radicalization as a process through which an individual embraces and supports violent extremism.<sup>31</sup>

**Religious extremism** – the use of religious ideas and explanations to justify the violent actions of a group or organization. Religious extremists support religious interpretations that justify the use of violence in the service of religion against those they consider religious rivals, mainly consisting of non-believers or followers of other religions. For example, terrorist groups such as the Islamic

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26 Squires, Nick, “Wagner mercenaries helping Serbia prepare potential attack on our nation, Kosovan president warns,” The Telegraph, Feb. 11, 2023 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/02/11/wagner-mercenaries-helping-serbia-prepare-potential-attack-nation/>

27 See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime discussion on terrorism definition and the lack of agreement on universal definition of the term <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/terrorism/module-4/key-issues/defining-terrorism.html> and one on the lack of agreement on universal definition of violent extremism <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/zh/terrorism/module-2/key-issues/radicalization-violent-extremism.html>

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Council of Europe. 2016. “Handbook for Prisons and Probation Services Regarding Radicalization and Violent Extremism.” <https://rm.coe.int/16806f9aa9>

31 Ibid.

State have used and interpreted the concept of “jihad” to serve their political and ideological interests.

In the current context, religious extremism usually refers to Islamist extremism. Researchers at the London-based Center for Strategic Dialogue<sup>32</sup> have divided Islamist extremism into four categories: 1) **Legalist Islamism**, which includes political activists who aim to systematically change society and gradually replace the ruling order with a totalitarian Islamic state, but who do not support the use of violence to achieve their goals; 2) The revolutionary Islamism preached by the Islamist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir that aims to establish the Islamic caliphate with a totalitarian system and expansionist nature that claims that all Muslims must unite in a single state including through the annexation of existing states, 3) Political Salafism, includes those who actively work for the political transformation of the society into a totalitarian Islamist state based on their very conservative interpretation of the Islamic religion, and 4) Shia Islamists, who are supporters of the Iranian regime.

**Nationalist extremism or ultranationalism** – is an extreme form of nationalism through which a group of people with common national characteristics justify the use of violence and force to oppress other ethnic groups. This extremism is mainly practiced by inciting racial, ethnic and religious divisions and hatred, and mainly manifests itself against ethnic communities and immigrants, who often become targets to blame for economic and social failures in a state.<sup>33</sup>

**The extreme right** – has its roots in the fascist and Nazi movements of the 20th century. Often the extreme right manifests itself as an anti-democratic political movement that supports the use of violence as a legitimate form of achieving extreme right-wing goals and policies.<sup>34</sup> In some contexts, the extreme right is a racial concept whose proponents believe in the superiority of the white race. In other cases, its supporters are anti-Semites, xenophobes, authoritarians and believers in conspiracy theories aimed at weakening the role of the democratic state.<sup>35 36</sup>

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32 For more, see Center for Strategic Dialogue, <https://www.isdglobal.org/extremism/islamism/>, last accessed Feb. 21, 2023

33 For an introduction into extreme nationalism, see Encyclopedia Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/topic/fascism/Extreme-nationalism>

34 Jupskås, Anders Ravik and Iris Beau Segers. 2020. “What is Right-wing Extremism?” Center for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo. <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/what-is-right-wing-extremism.html>

35 For a thorough discussion of the extreme right ideologies, also see their manifestation as described in Encyclopedia Britannica, including scapegoating, populism, sexism and misogyny <https://www.britannica.com/topic/fascism/Extreme-nationalism>

36 European Union policy documents also define violent right-wing extremism as “acts of individuals or groups who use, incite, threaten with, legitimise or support violence and hatred to further their political or ideological goals, motivated by ideologies based on the rejection of democratic order and values as well as of fundamental rights, and centred on exclusionary nationalism, racism, xenophobia and/or related intolerance.” (See for instance <https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/violent-right-wing-ex->

**Far Left** – inspired by left-wing Marxist ideologies, far-left groups were largely a feature of the Cold War between the West and the Soviet Union. The political positions of the extreme left are essentially anti-capitalist, anarchist, pro-Communist and so-called “anti-fa,” which is short for “anti-fascist” attitudes.<sup>37</sup> Like extreme right groups, extreme left groups also use the ideological cloak to justify violence as a means to achieve political goals. Both of these extremes consider the state incapable of addressing and fulfilling their ideological beliefs.

**Terrorist organizations such as “Al Fateh al Sham” or the “Islamic State”** have lured their supporters in Kosovo through a blend of legalistic Islamism, revolutionary Islamism preached by Takfirist ideology and political Salafism. For several years during the period of recruitment with intensive propaganda, the Islamic State has called for the creation of the “Caliphate” through a narrative built on internal debates such as the dispute over the construction of the mosque in the center of Pristina or criticism of Kosovo’s institutions and their international partners as unfit to fulfill the promises to transform Kosovo into an advanced country. The country’s institutions are portrayed as corrupt and completely dependent on their Western alliances. At the same time, this group presented the war of the “Islamic State” as part of a wider global battle, and in that narrative, Kosovo Albanians were portrayed as part of the global Muslim community living within a united political entity, protected from the future threats to their religious identity.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to the potent Islamist threat, Kosovo’s national security in recent years has also been endangered by the extreme right and similar nationalist movements originating in Serbia and Russia. These movements dispute the statehood and independence of Kosovo from Serbia and find support in the ranks of paramilitary and institutional structures of Serbia. The members of these movements, whose activities are often coordinated and interconnected, have a territorial reach throughout the region and in particular in the Serbian enclaves where the authority of local institutions is challenged.<sup>39</sup> United in mission and iconography, these groups and their members are violent in defense of Orthodox Christian identity with narrative roots in the myth of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. The risk of destabilizing Kosovo through these groups has increased since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, taking into account the misuse of the example of Kosovo to justify the Russian invasion by the highest Russian state officials, as well as the speculation about the flocking of Serbian volunteers

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37 For a more thorough and nuanced discussion of far-left parties and their contemporary agenda in Europe, see Luke March’s “Contemporary Far Left Parties in Europe: From Marxism to Mainstream?” published by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2008. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/jpa/05818.pdf>

38 Discussion of key points of the ISIS narratives in Kosovo can be found in Kraja, Garentina. 2017. “The Islamic State Narrative in Kosovo, deconstructed one story at a time.” Kosovar Center for Security Studies, <https://qkss.org/en/publikimet/the-islamic-state-narrative-in-kosovo-deconstructed-one-story-at-a-time>

39 Tika, Vera. “Kosovo Issue has Expanded Far Right’s Global Reach,” Balkan Insight, Oct.19, 2022. <https://balkaninsight.com/2022/10/19/kosovo-issue-has-expanded-serbian-far-rights-global-reach/>

as foreign fighters in the Russian front in Ukraine.<sup>40</sup> Lastly, the presence of the infamous Russian group Wagner in the region, along with the close ties of this group with the Serbian right-wing extremist organizations, presents an immediate concern for Kosovo's security, which has already become the target of the projection of Russian power in the Western Balkans.<sup>41</sup>

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40 McGlynn, Jade, "Why Putin Keeps Talking about Kosovo," Foreign Policy, March 3, 2022. <https://foreign-policy.com/2022/03/03/putin-ukraine-russia-nato-kosovo/>

41 Komarcevic, Dusan. "Serbian Right-Winger Says Vagner Ties Could Help If There's 'Conflict In Kosovo,'" Radio Free Europe, Dec. 6, 2022 <https://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-russia-vagner-kosovo-ultranationalists-/32164146.html>



## 2. ELABORATION AND SUMMARY OF THE BEST INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES THAT ARE CURRENTLY APPLIED IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BY PROBATION SERVICES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS

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Although each country has its own security policies built on the basis of its own risk assessment of “foreign fighters” returned to their countries of origin, or the population that has been exposed to violent extremism and radicalization, this handbook will include a series of principles derived from the best practices globally, selected for the Kosovo context, in order to inform the policies and decisions of the Kosovo Probation Service during the rehabilitation and reintegration process of the formerly radicalized individuals.

The main aim of this summary is to serve as a guide for the Kosovo Probation Service officials. Its goal, however, is not to replace the experience and the practical knowledge of its officials to adapt to the circumstances and resources available as they pertain to Kosovo and this vulnerable group of individuals.

In particular, this compilation of best practices aims to facilitate the work of SHSK officials when dealing with children and women, ensuring a gender-sensitive approach that takes into account the stress and trauma that these individuals have experienced.

The Hedaya Center for the Prevention of Radicalism and Violent Extremism, which is supported by the government of the United Arab Emirates and Western countries and is among the main international mechanisms in the study and fight of this phenomenon, has drawn up 143 principles for the rehabilitation and reintegration of fighters foreigners of terrorist organizations with an Islamist agenda around the world who have returned to their countries of origin after participating in the Middle East conflicts.<sup>42</sup> Below, we are highlighting the most important practices that could be applied to Kosovo’s context.

The authorities must ensure that all programs aimed at the reintegration and rehabilitation of foreign fighters respect the principles of international human

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42 Blueprint of a Rehabilitation and Reintegration Center, “Guiding Principles for Rehabilitating and Re-integrating Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters and their Family members.” Hedaya Center, 2020. [https://hedayah.com/app/uploads/2021/09/Final-Version\\_Blueprint-of-a-Rehabilitation-and-Reintegration-Center\\_FullVersion.pdf](https://hedayah.com/app/uploads/2021/09/Final-Version_Blueprint-of-a-Rehabilitation-and-Reintegration-Center_FullVersion.pdf)

rights law and comply with the rules for the treatment of prisoners. In terms of gender, women who are under the supervision of probation services should be provided with child care, space and resources for personal care and hygiene. Their physical control should be done by female staff (principle 1).<sup>43</sup>

Another principle is that every stage of policy-making should include consultation with civil society and enable civil society to monitor the implementation of programs in order to quickly identify implementation challenges (principle 10).<sup>44</sup> Such a practice should be established and strengthened by the KPS during the drafting of their rehabilitation and reintegration policies or various KPS institutional policies.

Authorities must ensure that the environment in which reintegration takes place is safe for their client. Often, former foreign fighters face threats from their community because of their previous activity, but also because of their cooperation with the authorities. Therefore, it is important that the institutions and their employees create a safe environment for the returnee in the community (principle 12).<sup>45</sup> In this respect, it is important for KPS to increase cooperation with the local community as well as NGOs operating at the local level, an engagement that would also affect the sustainability of these processes.

Another principle has to do with offering of rewards and punishments as encouragement and incentive to undergo the rehabilitation process. These rewards and punishments should be clearly communicated and applied consistently. Hedaya provides as an illustration the Georgia Prohibition Code, which provides a number of encouraging measures including the cancellation of the disciplinary measure, family visitation, additional visits or telephone calls to family and other relatives (principle 18).<sup>46</sup>

To succeed in the rehabilitation and reintegration process, it is desirable for the authorities to learn through research and analysis the needs of their clients and their social, cultural and economic context. Such an analysis will enable the authorities to prepare adequate measures that respond to those needs and facilitate the process of rehabilitation and reintegration (principle 20).<sup>47</sup> It is crucial that KCS and MIA provide data to KPS regarding the driving factors of radicalization for those convicted of terrorism. Other institutions should share with KPS the monitoring reports for those convicted of terrorism so that KPS has the opportunity to draft regular analysis and reports for individuals under its supervision.

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43 Ibid, p. 22

44 Ibid, p. 37

45 Ibid, p. 40

46 Ibid, p. 43

47 Ibid, p. 46

Juveniles should be treated separately from adults under the supervision of correctional and probation services, in particular through programs that address stigmatization and isolation from their community (principle 24).<sup>48</sup>

In cases where the entire family is radicalized, children should be given the opportunity to be treated separately so that they are not constantly under the influence of other radicalized family members. At the same time, it is preferable that the same employees supervise each family member to familiarize themselves with their context and progress towards rehabilitation. Mothers must stay together with their infants and young children (principle 25).<sup>49</sup>

Principle 26<sup>50</sup> calls for the cooperation of all state institutions, including those at the municipal and local level, such as health workers, teachers, religious figures, to coordinate jointly and discuss each case together at least once a week. These meetings should be held without the presence of the police and law enforcement agencies.

A close coordination and exchange of information at each level through a common mechanism is a condition for the success of rehabilitation and reintegration programs (principle 28).<sup>51</sup>

Prior preparation work with the community is highly recommended so that the community is ready to accept foreign fighters and their families among them (principle 33).<sup>52</sup>

Staff should be trained to see former foreign fighters as individuals who are trying to rehabilitate, and institutional staff should take care of creating a supportive environment that does not stigmatize these individuals. At the same time, the staff must be well trained to resist ideological and corrupt manipulations by these individuals. It is extremely important that the staff consists of women who will exclusively deal with women returning from conflict areas (principle 44 and 45).<sup>53</sup>

In addition to probation officers, it is recommended that institutions hire psychologists or psycho-social counselors, social workers, vocational trainers, art instructors, religious leaders, community liaisons, and health professionals. Rehabilitated former foreign fighters who can share their personal experience can also be part of this team that works with former foreign fighters (principle

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48 Ibid, p. 53

49 Ibid, p. 55

50 Ibid, p. 56

51 Ibid, p. 60

52 Ibid, p. 65

53 Ibid, p. 82-83

47).<sup>54</sup> Hedaya cites the example of Singapore, which has successfully reintegrated and rehabilitated radicalized individuals through a volunteer group of respected Islamic scholars and teachers who have addressed the misreading and interpretation of the religion that has led to violent extremism.

An essential part of rehabilitation programs is the drafting of an evaluation report for individuals subject to correctional and probation services. Within the framework of the principles, Hedaya proposes that the relevant institutions evaluate each individual subject to their care, including as a measure to build individuals' trust in the rehabilitation system. The assessment should be part of each individual's file and it should include details of living conditions, family circumstances or any past criminal record (principle 83).<sup>55</sup> This information can be gathered from conversations with family members, but in Hedaya's assessment, it is preferable that the source of this primary information is the individual who has undergone the rehabilitation process through an open and informal conversation and less in the form of interrogation, as is the practice of law enforcement agencies. Hedaya cites the case of Somalia, where for individuals who were once members of the notorious al Shabab organization, the rehabilitation center had collected client information through an instrument/survey that gathered personal details, demographic data, motivations for joining the terrorist organization, as well as psycho-social assessments, alongside risk assessment and preference for participation in vocational training.

Building trust between authorities and individuals who have been exposed to violent extremism is considered a key link in the process of rehabilitation of former foreign fighters. Hedaya recommends that employees communicate openly and respectfully with individuals under their supervision, manage expectations and not make promises they cannot meet (principle 85).<sup>56</sup> In particular, it is important that the officials do not communicate with prejudice with the individuals under their supervision, but approach them with consideration and readiness to help them in the rehabilitation process, and in particular, be open to listen to them even when the staff disagrees with their ideological beliefs (principle 90).<sup>57</sup>

Trust is also built through honest communication about the institution's expectations of the individuals under its supervision. Clear and consistent communication about rules, restrictions and behavior is essential for the success of the rehabilitation process, as is the equal access of individuals for their rights (principle 93).<sup>58</sup> Hedaya recommends that the classification of individuals subject to the rehabilitation process be done through age, gender and level

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54 Ibid, p. 85

55 Ibid, p. 133

56 Ibid, p. 137

57 Ibid, p. 140

58 Ibid, p. 142

of vulnerability (principle 95)<sup>59</sup> It brings forward as an example the case of the Netherlands, where individuals are categorized on the basis of five categories, starting from those convicted of terrorism to hate mongers. The organization also encourages the use of certain instruments to assess the risk of their clients and to conduct a regular assessment of their needs (principle 98 and 99).<sup>60</sup>

From the experience of Kosovo researchers who have interviewed marginalized groups as well as those exposed to trauma, the most efficient way to collect data on research subjects is to adapt methods used in the discipline of oral history, where the interviewee chooses what he/she wants to share with the interlocutor without following any specific questionnaire or agenda. In this form, the subject is not pressured to talk about the trauma without being ready to do so, and at the same time he is given the opportunity to feel in charge of his story, clarifying the causes and consequences of his decisions from a personal prism.

Hedaya believes that the key to the success of rehabilitation programs is the individually designed plan for each participant undergoing such a program and in cases where it is possible through their direct participation in the design of the plan to encourage them to have ownership and to commit to goals and the process toward their fulfillment (principle 105).<sup>61</sup>

In the case of women undergoing rehabilitation programs, the guide is the UN Security Council Resolution 2396, which calls for gender-sensitive rehabilitation programs. According to Hedaya's principle 107<sup>62</sup> this often means psychosocial treatment that helps women deal with the trauma and violence that they may have faced during their involvement in terrorist groups. At the same time, women who returned from conflict zones in the Middle East are often the target of stigmatization from the community where they return because of their participation in terrorist groups or the fact that they are married to violent extremists. The community and the family can exclude them entirely and this factor must be taken into account when designing the individual rehabilitation plan, including the possibility that in case of such rejection the woman will be moved to a whole different community.

Meanwhile, for minors it is essential that they return to normality as soon as possible, which in most cases means going back to school, joining different sports clubs, but also receiving psychological care to address the traumas that they have been exposed to during their stay in premises controlled by terrorist groups (principle 108).<sup>63</sup>

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59 Ibid, p. 144

60 Ibid, p. 152

61 Ibid, p. 158

62 Ibid, p. 161

63 Ibid, p. 162

Regarding rehabilitation plans, to ensure consistency it is recommended that each individual undergoing the rehabilitation program have a dedicated “case manager” to monitor and track the individual progress of these former foreign fighters on a regular basis (principle 109).<sup>64</sup>

To make clients’ progress measurable, personalized rehabilitation plans must contain clearly defined goals, and even small steps of change—indicators that individuals have begun to change their attitudes—must be recorded. According to principle 114,<sup>65</sup> in order to have a successful monitoring program, an initial assessment must be made that summarizes the basic data about the client’s condition before undergoing the rehabilitation program. This assessment should be used to monitor and measure any changes that occur due to the rehabilitation plan and can also serve to improve the personalized plan throughout the rehabilitation process. For example, Hedaya cites the case of extremists of the infamous Boko Haram organization, who had forbidden the teaching of mathematics and language during their terrorist activity, but as part of the rehabilitation program had begun to acquire these subjects with enthusiasm.

Programmatic interventions for the rehabilitation of former foreign fighters and other returnees from conflict zones controlled by terrorist groups are diverse and often depend on the resources available to institutions. These interventions can be psychosocial counseling, mentoring, critical thinking training, religious counseling that challenges religious interpretation that leads to the use of violence, participation in sports, but also various lectures that expand the range of these individuals either by improve their communication or by giving them new knowledge which they can apply to their professional goals in the future. For these methods to be successful, Hedaya recommends the involvement of third parties who have expertise in these areas (principle 116).<sup>66</sup> In the case of children, the organization recommends 5 principles related to the promotion of mental health and well-being, support from family, school, community support and improved safety.

Since rehabilitation also depends on other factors that individuals cannot fully control, it is important that institutions work with civil society and local authorities to prepare the community for the return of former foreign fighters and to prepare individuals who are subjected to rehabilitation about some of the prejudices that exist in society and the community for them (principle 120).<sup>67</sup> This sensitive process must be managed carefully, taking into account that mistakes during it can arouse negative feelings and trigger traumas in these individuals. Therefore,

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64 Ibid, p. 166

65 Ibid, p. 170

66 Ibid, p. 181

67 Ibid, p. 186

it is important to invest in preliminary preparation for their return and to create opportunities for continuous communication that leads to mutual trust between the parties. Reintegration also means continued assistance and support, including for programs in which individuals can be included or finding jobs for which individuals may have the expertise (principle 125).<sup>68</sup>

Taking into account the stigma faced by women returned from areas controlled by the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations, Kosovo institutions must find modalities of cooperation with women's organizations at the local level to help with their socialization and gradual integration into the community. In Kosovo, women's organizations have worked for decades with women survivors of sexual violence during the war or victims of domestic violence, and their expertise and experience with the rehabilitation of these marginalized groups can help in the reintegration of these women. In particular, these organizations over the years have provided "safe spaces" for women who have been victimized to speak freely and with complete confidentiality about their experiences. Participation in these "safe spaces" is considered a stepping stone that helps the reintegration process. Similarly, these organizations can provide a platform for these individuals to speak openly about their experience and give them the opportunity to apologize to the community for their actions through a process of reconciliation and dialogue (principle 131).<sup>69</sup>

As with the rehabilitation process, the reintegration process must also be measurable. For the assessment of the reintegration of these individuals, discussions should include a wider circle, including the family, employer, and the society at large (principle 130).<sup>70</sup> This process is also recommended to be done through the creation of an environment that encourages radicalized individuals to challenge their radical beliefs, ideology and decision to join terrorist organizations, but without directly confronting or reprimanding them. Also, it is essential to clarify to the community the important role it has in the rehabilitation and reintegration of these individuals and to explain it as an opportunity for the community to give its contribution to the general security. At this stage, it is recommended to work intensively with civil society organizations, which often play the role of mediators between institutions and the community (principle 136).<sup>71</sup>

Each reintegration effort must be accompanied by a clear communication strategy with the community which must be implemented in advance (principle 139).<sup>72</sup> It is essential that institutions communicate with the media at this stage and

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68 Ibid, p. 190

69 Ibid, p. 198

70 Ibid, p. 197

71 Ibid, p. 206

72 Ibid, p. 210

work with them, informing them of the dangers of stigmatization and the negative impact that this stigmatization can have on the rehabilitation and reintegration process. Also, for an effective communication strategy it is important that the individuals who go through the process of rehabilitation and reintegration are part of the awareness campaign either through their confessions about this experience and regret to join such causes, or through facing the victims of their actions (principle 143).<sup>73</sup>

### **BEARING IN MIND THESE PRINCIPLES, THE KOSOVO PROBATION SERVICE NEEDS TO INVEST RESOURCES:**

- To draft a guide for the classification of individuals under the supervision of the KPS based on the structured risk assessment
- To create a mechanism for the periodic assessment of individuals before and after program interventions to monitor the impact of such interventions on their deradicalization
- To design programmatic interventions depending on the needs of the individuals under supervision
- To build expertise for the formulation of project-proposals to relevant institutions in Kosovo and international partners for support, including the design of goals and interventions
- Trainings on the approach of KPS officials towards radicalized individuals, with special emphasis on minors and women
- To standardize the definitions with the institutions and organizations of civil society as they pertain to former foreign fighters and their families
- To synchronize goals, plans and programs between actors through regular meetings between KPS officials and other shareholders
- Exchange of information with other institutions that are directly or indirectly involved in the rehabilitation, reintegration of the radicalized and the prevention or fight against violent extremism
- Establishing a relationship between the families and the community of the radicalized individuals and the local community at large;
- Networking and enlistment of assistance of non-institutional actors - community leaders, religious figures - in the rehabilitation process to work alongside KPS officials

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73 Ibid, p. 216



2.Elaboration and summary of the best international practices that are currently applied in European countries by probation services in the framework of rehabilitation and reintegration programs

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- Raising the capacities of KPS for strategic communication with the media and the public for their work in general, as well as the rehabilitation and reintegration process in particular;

## 3. REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION PROCESS

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For KPS to be successful in its goal to rehabilitate and reintegrate returnees from the conflict areas in the Middle East and in minimizing recidivism and the threat that this group of individuals presents to national security, in addition to identifying individual and collective characteristics of this group (according to the Analysis under 1 and the principles detailed in part 2), it is key to draft practices that are in accordance with the KPS code of ethics that respects the rights of individuals who are going through the probation system.

But first, let's define what we mean by rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as programmatic interventions that are essential to minimize the presence of violent extremism and radicalization in Kosovo.

### 3.1 WHAT IS REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION?

Kosovo is among the few countries that has decided to take responsibility for its citizens who have been involved with the Islamic State and other terrorist organizations. As of May 2019, approximately 130 Kosovars have returned to Kosovo from war zones. They have been investigated, charged and convicted in line with the applicable laws in Kosovo. Moreover, with US support, the Government of Kosovo, in May 2019, repatriated 110 citizens of Kosovo from refugee camps in Syria and Iraq. Of the returnees, 4 were foreign fighters, and the rest were women and children. Also, in July 2021, Kosovo repatriated 11 of its citizens from conflict zones. Since 2011 when the conflict broke out in these areas and until now, more than 250 of its citizens have been repatriated to Kosovo from Syria and Iraq.

According to KPS data, there are a total of 82 individuals under their supervision as of December 2022, of which 28 are male parolees, who have been convicted of terrorism and violent extremism, and 28 women sentenced to probation for terrorism, violent extremism and participation in foreign wars.

Considering the serious nature of this criminal offense and the danger that this activity inspired by extremist ideology poses to the national security of the countries where this phenomenon is present, it is imperative that individuals who have embraced violent extremism or who have been exposed to it to be placed under institutional supervision that minimizes the possibilities of recidivism. This institutional supervision is done for the purpose of rehabilitation and reintegration through programs, or so-called specific "interventions."

In the context of violent extremism and radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programs aim to address the triggers that have lured a country's citizens to join terrorist causes and organizations and work with individuals to confront their ideological and violent beliefs after they have faced justice and served the prison sentence following their conviction. The main goal of these programs is for these individuals to return to society as de-radicalized, removed from the ideology that inspired their radicalization and embrace of terrorist organizations and extremist causes, and to minimize the risk of their recidivism.

According to the Council of Europe, the purpose of interventions through so-called "targeted programs" to which individuals who have been exposed to violent extremism or who have embraced that ideology are subjected, is to remove individuals from this cause, that is, to work on distancing them from terrorist and extremist groups and de-radicalize them, i.e. change their ideological beliefs.<sup>74</sup>

In the context of violent extremism and radicalization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has defined rehabilitation and reintegration as a process through which individuals who have participated in extremist organizations or supported extremist ideology and promoted the use of violence to achieve ideological goals, through various programs, after having served the punishment for the criminal offense, are helped to return to normality as contributing citizens in their society.<sup>75</sup>

**Rehabilitation** is defined as the process through which individuals once indoctrinated with extremist ideology gradually distance themselves from extremist groups, denounce ideological causes, and distance themselves from the use of violence to achieve political, social, ideological, and similar goals through psychosocial counseling, critical thinking, the right interpretation of religious rules and benefit a new set of skills that prepares them for the labor market.<sup>76</sup> In short, this process hopes to return these radicalized individuals to the state prior to their alignment with terrorist causes, when the individuals were members of their community with full responsibilities and privileges and when they did not pose a threat to national security.<sup>77</sup>

Reintegration, on the other hand, means their gradual return to the community and society after they have distanced themselves from extremist groups and

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74 Council of Europe, Handbook for Prisons and Probation Services Regarding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism, 2016, <https://rm.coe.int/16806f9aa9>, p. 20

75 For more recommendations and policy guideline discussion see Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's "Non-custodial Rehabilitation and Reintegration in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Extremism: A Guidebook for Policy-makers and Practitioners in South-Eastern Europe," January, 2020 at, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/444838>

76 Council of Europe, Handbook for Prisons and Probation Services Regarding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism, 2016, <https://rm.coe.int/16806f9aa9>

77 Ibid.

changed their beliefs that had led them to support extremist causes.<sup>78</sup>

### **3.2 WHY DO WE NEED REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMS?**

Programs for the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists are institutional or civil society interventions designed to remove radicalized individuals and supporters of violent extremism and change their ideological beliefs so that they do not support these causes in the future. Such rehabilitation and reintegration programs are implemented in two settings - in prisons, where individuals serve their sentence, or after their release from serving prison sentences and upon their return to the community.<sup>79</sup>

### **3.3 WHAT SHOULD WE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT BEFORE STARTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAM?**

Programs for the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals who have supported violent extremism are essentially programs through which institutions hope to prevent the influence of terrorist organizations and society's support for them.

Working with individuals who have supported violent extremism and those who have been exposed to violent extremism is difficult from a security perspective and from a resource perspective. This work is made even more difficult by the structural problems that led these individuals to join extremist organizations in the first place, because those structural problems along with personal motives may still be present in the environment when these individuals are expected to rehabilitate.

Another challenge that institutions may face during the implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration programs is the stigmatization of the former foreign fighters and their families by their own circle and the wider society. The community remains extremely skeptical of the sincerity of these individuals to rehabilitate and reintegrate into the society as contributing citizens, but also fearful of the danger these individuals pose to their community. For example, in the Security Barometer conducted by the Kosovo Center for Security Studies in 2022, over 50% of respondents continue to have a negative attitude towards the reintegration of former fighters into their community, or are against their

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

return to the community.<sup>80</sup>

And lastly, the success of rehabilitation and reintegration programs will depend on the clearly defined indicators through which the transformation of these individuals is measured. Although the most accurate measure of the success of this institutional enterprise is the percentage of recidivist individuals, such a measure may not always be the most accurate indicator of the efforts of the many officials involved in this long-term process. Therefore, it is of crucial importance that every rehabilitation program is accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation plan with clearly defined indicators.

#### **3.4 THE APPROACH: HOW TO BUILD TRUST BETWEEN THE KPS AND THE RETURNED FOREIGN FIGHTER, A WOMAN OR A CHILD?**

Individuals who have joined terrorist organizations and their family members who have been exposed to violent extremism have gone through exceptionally traumatic experiences.

They have been members of terrorist organizations that have used systematic violence against the population in war zones controlled by the Islamic State and similar groups.<sup>81</sup> Although information about the experience of their family members in the Islamic State camps is scarce, it is sufficient to assume that the women may have been targets of violence, difficult conditions in the camps, and trauma caused by the loss of their family members.

A number of these individuals are believed to continue to have radical religious beliefs and a conservative approach and a relationship of mistrust via the state institutions<sup>82</sup>. This lack of trust in state institutions weighs heavily on the Kosovo Probation Service, but at the same time creates opportunities for the Service's staff to use their approach and mission to rehabilitate these individuals so that they no longer pose a risk and are no more a threat to Kosovo's security. It also represents an opportunity to build a new chapter of relations between the state and these citizens.

For the rehabilitation process to be successful, the practices drafted by international organizations that have built expertise in combating the phenomenon of violent extremism, call on the institutions and their leaders to invest in building trust with the returnees free of prejudice and to implement their

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81 Shtuni, Adrian. 2021. "Rehabilitation and Reintegration Path of Kosovar Minors and Women Repatriated from Syria," International Republican Institute. <https://www.iri.org/resources/new-report-supports-rehabilitation-of-kosovo-youth-and-women-with-connection-to-violent-extremism/>

82 Ibid.

mandate in accordance with international norms and human rights.<sup>83</sup>

To build this trust, KPS should take into account some of the principles of the Hedaya organization identified in the second part of this manual.

It is of utmost importance to continuously train the KPS staff by experts on the threat of violent extremism, and that officials who are in charge of supervising these cases are offered the opportunity to self-care due to the psychological burden that their work involves.

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83 See discussion of gaps and opportunities in Erinda Bllaca Ndroqi's analysis "Dealing with returned women in the Western Balkans: challenges and opportunities from a practitioner's perspective," Radicalization Awareness Network, 2021 [https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-08/ran\\_wb\\_ad-hoc\\_dealing\\_with\\_returned\\_women\\_in\\_wb\\_082022\\_en.pdf](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-08/ran_wb_ad-hoc_dealing_with_returned_women_in_wb_082022_en.pdf)

## 4. TERMS AND TERMINOLOGY

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In order to facilitate the communication between KPS officials and individuals under their supervision who have been exposed to violent extremism, below is a summary of terms to assist KPS staff in the course of their work.

**Jihad** – As described in the Quran and other religious sources, the word “Jihad” can have many meanings. With jihad we can refer to the efforts of Muslim believers to be devout believers and to inform other people about the Islamic faith. The word jihad also means the defense of Islam. If peaceful methods do not work for the protection of the Islamic faith, then the use of violence is also allowed, but with strict predetermined rules. Harming innocent civilians, women, children and the disabled is strictly prohibited in the execution of “Military Jihad” and every peaceful effort of the enemy must be accepted. However, the military aspect of jihad is only one of its meanings and cannot be limited to this aspect alone. Jihad should be understood only in terms of protection or “defensive Jihad” and thus not offensive Jihad. The Arabic word that refers to war is “Al-Harb”, therefore the interpretation of the word “Jihad” as “Holy War” is also wrong from a linguistic point of view.<sup>84</sup>

**Jihad according to ISIS** – Terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS have constantly misused the word “Jihad.” They have interpreted it only in the narrow sense of offensive warfare and the use of violence by Muslims against non-believers and others who do not share the same ideology as those groups. Through “jihad” terrorist groups have tried to legitimize the killing of civilians who do not obey the orders of terrorist groups. Such groups have tried to hide their acts under the guise of “Jihad” as a war in the name of Allah in order to justify the war and violence they use.<sup>85</sup>

**Jihadist** – The term “Jihadist” in religious literature refers to those individuals who are strongly engaged in the pursuit and spread of the Islamic faith in a peaceful manner, without causing harm to others, and constantly strive to become as pious a believer as possible.<sup>86</sup>

**Jihadist according to ISIS** – As with the word “Jihad,” in terrorist organizations the term “Jihadist” is defined only in terms of offensive warfare and the use of violence. According to these organizations, “Jihadist” is any individual who

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84 For a full historical discussion of the term, see Encyclopedia Britannica’s definition <https://www.britannica.com/topic/jihad>

85 “What is jihadism?” *BBC News*, Dec. 2014 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30411519>

86 Ibid.

fighters non-believers, Western countries and secular states and embraces the ideologies of terrorist organizations.<sup>87</sup>

**Recommendation** – It is recommended that the word “Jihad” and “Jihadist” be used minimally, or not at all, when discussing terrorist organizations. Using the word “Jihad” for terrorist organizations inadvertently legitimizes their cause. Instead use: massacres, murders, ethnic cleansing carried out by terrorist organizations in the name of religion or “Jihad”.

In recent years, the most prestigious national and international media have referred to members of terrorist organizations as “jihadist.” Referring to them as “jihadist” does them a favor and indirectly serves their cause.

**Caliphate** – Caliphate is the notion of an Islamic state led by the Caliph, who is the political and religious leader of the state and represents all believers of the Islamic faith. The last caliphate existed during the Ottoman Empire.<sup>88</sup>

**Caliphate according to ISIS** – ISIS has managed to convince individuals and groups from all over the world through its propaganda that they have created the utopian caliphate known as the “Islamic State of Syria and Iraq.” According to ISIS, the “new state” is the place where all Muslims can live freely and has encouraged everyone to join it and recognize its leader as the de facto “Caliph” of all Muslims.<sup>89</sup>

**How to use it** – It is recommended that the “Islamic State” is put in quotation marks or refer to it as “the so-called Islamic State”.

**Hadith** – Approximately 200 years after the death of the prophet Muhammad, his messages and deeds have been passed down orally from generation to generation. In the ninth century, the collection and recording of the prophet’s words, deeds or orders, which are now known as Hadiths, began.<sup>90</sup>

**Qafir/kafir** – one who is ungrateful, a non-believer. Islam as a monotheistic faith, and the Qur’an commands belief in one God and promises punishment for those who reject God (Allah as the sole ruler of the worlds) and are non-

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87 Ibid.

88 Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, “Glossary of Terms related to Islam and Muslim Communities in Inter-Religious Settings,” <https://cmes.uchicago.edu/sites/cmes.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Outreach/Resources/Religion/Glossary%20of%20Terms%20Related%20to%20Islam%20and%20Muslim%20Communities%20in%20Interregional%20Settings.pdf>  
<https://cmes.uchicago.edu/sites/cmes.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Glossary%20of%20Terms.pdf>

89 Mapping Militant Organizations. “The Islamic State.” Stanford University, last modified April 2021. [https://cisoc.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state#text\\_block\\_18356](https://cisoc.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state#text_block_18356)

90 For a historical overview of the term see Encyclopedia Britannica under “Hadith” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Hadith> and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, “Glossary of Terms related to Islam and Muslim Communities in Inter-Religious Settings,” <https://cmes.uchicago.edu/sites/cmes.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Outreach/Resources/Religion/Glossary%20of%20Terms%20Related%20to%20Islam%20and%20Muslim%20Communities%20in%20Interregional%20Settings.pdf>



believers in him.<sup>91</sup>

**Usage according to ISIS** – ISIS and other terrorist groups have used the word Kafir for all those who have not embraced their terrorist ideology. ISIS and other terrorist groups have called all other Muslims infidels who were not their members and did not follow the same agenda as these groups.<sup>92</sup>

**Daesh (Da'ish)** – The word Daesh has found wide use in the Middle East and not only to refer to the terrorist group "ISIS". The word Daesh is mainly used to challenge the legitimacy of the group due to the negative connotation of the word. Daesh is basically an acronym of the first letters of the group's old name, "al-Dawla al-Islamiya fil Iraq wa al-Sham". Although the word has no meaning in Arabic, it sounds unpleasant and the group's supporters refuse to use it.<sup>93</sup>

**Sharia** – Sharia is the Islamic legal foundation and is considered a regulatory system of Islamic religious and state life and organization. Sharia includes comprehensive legal guidelines for all areas of life which are justifiable and acceptable in Islam. The basic principles of the Sharia determine the model that an individual of the Islamic faith must follow for the worship of Allah: Prayers, humanity, fasting and pilgrimage. In essence, Sharia is the totality of Allah's commandments as set forth in the holy book of the Qur'an and other legal documents.<sup>94 95</sup>

**Mujahid** – Muslims who participate in the defense of lands inhabited by Muslims, or make various efforts to protect the oppressed, the poor or the exploited or react against the oppression of the state or foreign invaders are considered Mujahid. Someone can be called a mujahid even if he does not die on the battlefield, but dies while remaining loyal to the truth and jihad in the sense of the righteous war.<sup>96</sup>

**The Holy War** – The Holy War is one of the efforts to protect Islam. Holy war, unlike Jihad, is limited in the classical sense of war. However, holy war has its own strict rules as to when it must take place, and it can only begin with a declaration by legitimate religious authority. In Islam, "Holy War" can be done in self-defense, when a state attacks an Islamic state or if a state, secular or not,

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91 Akyol, Mustafa. 2019. "Who is a 'Kafir'?" Cato Institute, <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/who-kafir>

92 Counter-Terrorism Project, Glossary, 2023, <https://www.counterextremism.com/content/kafir>

93 "Isis, Isil, IS or Daesh? One group, many names," BBC News, Dec. 2, 2015 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27994277>

94 For more, see Encyclopedia Britannica's definition and nuances of Sharia and its use <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shariah> and in CMES's Glossary <https://cmes.uchicago.edu/sites/cmes.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/Glossary%20of%20Terms.pdf>

95 Christine Schirrmacher. "The Sharia – Law and Order in Islam" <https://christineschirrmacher.info/2013/05/the-sharia-law-and-order-in-islam/>

96 For more, see Encyclopedia Britannica's discussion of "mujahideen" in Islam, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mujahideen-Islam>

attacks its own citizens of the Islamic faith.

**The “Holy War”** according to Islam must be carried out carefully, without harming the civilian population, the use of force must be kept to a minimum without resentment and anger, and prisoners must be treated in a humane and dignified manner.

Terrorist organizations like ISIS, among others, have distorted the principles of the “Holy War”. They have only introduced elements that suit their respective groups and agendas. The “Holy War” proclaimed by ISIS does not contain any elements of the “Holy War” argued through the Koran and other religious documents. ISIS has committed serious crimes against civilians, mistreated prisoners of war, and declared holy war without being a legitimate religious authority, and their war as such is not supported by the Muslim world.<sup>97</sup>

**Islamic State** – Any state system which is governed on the basis of Islamic religious rules and has Sharia Law is considered an Islamic state. The terrorist group Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) – emerged in 2014 after taking control of a large part of Syria and Iraq. In reality, the so-called “Islamic State of Syria and Iraq” cannot be considered an Islamic state for reasons that can be found in other parts of this text. The Islamic State of Syria and Iraq has been called different names in various national and international media such as: Islamic State (IS), Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS), Islamic State of Syria and the Levant (ISIL) or DAESH. Many media have referred to this group as the “Islamic State Group” to avoid inadvertently creating a link between this group and the Islamic religion as a whole.

**Sunni** – It is the largest sect in Islam, consisting of about 85% of Muslims all over the world. Sunnis are mainly located in countries such as Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan, North Africa, Jordan, Palestine and the majority of the Muslim population in the Balkan countries, including Albanian-speaking countries. Most of the terrorist groups in the world, including ISIS and Al-Qaeda, have claimed to belong to the Sunni sect.<sup>98</sup>

**Shia** – is the second largest sect in the Islamic religion after the Sunni sect. The center of the Shia is Iran. Large numbers of the Shia population are also found in Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain. The divisions between the Sunni and Shia sects date back to the early period of Islam and evolve around the successors of the Prophet Muhammad. The two sects had different views on who should be the heir and what path Muslims should follow.<sup>99</sup>

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97 For more thorough discussion on ISIS and its war of attrition see US Institute of Peace’s “The Jihadi Threat: ISIS, Al-Qaeda and Beyond,” 2016/2017 <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/The-Jihadi-Threat-ISIS-Al-Qaeda-and-Beyond.pdf>

98 For a thorough historical overview of the term, see the definition of Encyclopedia Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sunni>

99 For a thorough historical overview of the term, see the definition of Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://>

**Chief Imam** - is the highest religious authority in the interpretation of Quranic law and religious order in the country with Sunni presence. This title is usually used in this sect. In the case of Kosovo, this title relates to the Mufti of Kosovo, who is the leader of the Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK).

**Imam** - the person who leads the prayers in the mosque, or the local religious leaders. In Kosovo, the word "hoxha" is used for imams.

**Qur'an** - is the foundational book of the Islamic religion and is known as the Holy Book. According to Muslim believers, the Qur'an is the word of God (Allah) and what is said in it must be implemented and respected by every Muslim in the world.

**Sahab/Sahaba** - are the friends or fellow travelers of the prophet Muhammad. Different Islamic scholars have expressed different views regarding the definition of "Sahabi" (companions). Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani in his book "al-Isaba" defines "Sahaba" as "a person who believes in the Prophet, came together with the Prophet and died as a Muslim".<sup>100</sup>

**Salafism** - is an Islamic doctrine that originates from a hadith (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) that says: "The best people are those who live in my generation, and then those who will follow them, and then those who will follow the latter." This is a call for Muslims to follow the example of those first three generations beginning with the Prophet, as the most reliable references in Islamic interpretation<sup>101</sup>. In general, Salafists are less inclined toward active political engagement, preferring instead a "quiet" approach of preaching a conservative Islam, religious education, and avoiding confrontation with state authorities. A minority of Salafis can also be called Salafi-Jihadists, or violent salafists, which have inspired a fraction of terrorist organizations.<sup>102</sup>

**Mënyra e përdorimit** - Its use - Terrorist organizations have often been referred to in the media as "Salafists terrorists," an expression which is wrong because through that labeling those organizations are legitimized and a wider Islamic community that is not necessarily related to terrorism is affected. In these cases, when using the word Salafi, it is recommended to use the words violent or non-violent.

**Islamic Ummah** - In Arabic it means "Community," "Group" or "Nation." This

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[www.britannica.com/topic/Shii](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Shii)

100 Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani in his book "el-Isaba."

101 Kursani, Shpend. 2015. "Report on Causes and Consequences..."[http://www.gkss.org/repository/docs/Shkaqet\\_dhe\\_pasojat\\_e\\_perfshirjes\\_se\\_qytetareve\\_te\\_Kosoves\\_si\\_luftetare\\_te\\_huaj\\_ne\\_Siri\\_dhe\\_Irak\\_820753.pdf](http://www.gkss.org/repository/docs/Shkaqet_dhe_pasojat_e_perfshirjes_se_qytetareve_te_Kosoves_si_luftetare_te_huaj_ne_Siri_dhe_Irak_820753.pdf)

102 See also definition in Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion, 2016, <https://oxfordre.com/religion/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-255.jsessionid=02266D-D47A0B2A6086230BEB37084C6A> dhe te "Islamism, Salafism and Jihadism" ne [www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/07/15/islamism-salafism-and-jihadism-a-primer/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2016/07/15/islamism-salafism-and-jihadism-a-primer/)

term takes on a religious connotation in the Koran, where it is said that God has sent to each "Ummah" his prophet – Moses for the Jews, Jesus for the Christians and Muhammad for the Muslims. In principle, the Ummah can be described as the modern concept of citizenship, but nevertheless in the Islamic religion "citizenship" is earned on the basis of devotion to religion, regardless of ethnicity, and the "Ummah" represents a universal world order, led by an Islamic government based on the Sharia law.

**Extremism** – Currently extremism mainly refers to political and religious ideologies which are considered by different individuals or groups as unacceptable in forging social consensus. However, the word extremism cannot be limited to different ideologies, as it is also used to indicate something beyond the normal or in a strong opposition to something. The term extreme cannot refer only to a certain community or ideology, as the notion of extreme has different forms of manifestation.<sup>103</sup>

**Terrorism** – The use of violence for the purpose of inflicting terror on the civilian population. Terrorism is a special type of violent extremism.

**Jihadi Bride** – In the context of violent extremism, "jihadi bride" refers to women who strive to spread Islam, strive to become pious believers and strongly commit to following the path of Allah, as well as spreading the religion peacefully without causing harm to others.

**The bride of the jihadist** – according to ISIS is a new term used very recently as a result of a large number of women who have traveled with their husbands, or alone to live and marry fighters of terrorist organizations, including those of ISIS.

**Prayer** – Prayer is one of the five main elements that every Muslim believer is obliged to adhere to. Prayer according to Islam is a form of spiritual communication between people and God, a practice of prayer and gratitude.

**Imams of vengeance** – Supporters of extremist groups, namely ISIS, on social media are active in quoting and promoting imams from Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania who are convicted of terrorist activity such as recruiting or inciting hate speech. According to them, these imams are referred to as "imams of vengeance." They are the country's most controversial imams, who have radical attitudes against democratic processes and state order. During the lectures or writings of these imams, we encounter the language of hatred towards the Shia community, the Christian faith and the Jews. They preach a different line of religion from what is officially practiced by the religious community, and most of them publicly oppose the Islamic communities in the respective countries.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> For more, see Kosovo government strategy for prevention of violent extremism.

<sup>104</sup> Kelmendi, Vese dhe Shpat Balaj. 2017. "New Battlegrounds: Extremist Groups' Activity in Social Media in Kosovo, Albania and FYROM," KCSS, , [http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Neë\\_Batelgrounds\\_Extrem-ist\\_Groups\\_in\\_Social\\_Media\\_738865.pdf](http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Neë_Batelgrounds_Extrem-ist_Groups_in_Social_Media_738865.pdf)

**Imams of the state** – refer to Muslim religious leaders who are mainly part of the official Islamic Community in Albanian-speaking countries who practice Islam based on the rules set by the religious institutions in their respective countries. These imams are contracted from religious communities by the official Islamic institutions. Terrorist organizations and their supporters do not recognize these imams as legitimate because they have not supported their violent ideologies and have strongly opposed the recruitment of Kosovo citizens to become part of terrorist organizations. Terrorist groups and their supporters consider these imams as traitors because they are “fools of the secular state.”

**“Islam under attack”** – ISIS and other terrorist groups have used this argument to recruit foreign fighters. According to them, “Islam is in danger” from “crusaders and infidels” (America and the West). According to them, the Middle East and Islam are in danger of destruction by the “imperialists of the West” (America and the Crusaders) and that the Muslims of the whole world must fight and defeat the enemy as defined by them. Terrorist groups like ISIS blame regimes and secular governments that govern in Muslim-majority countries for attacking Islam, and call for their demise.<sup>105</sup>

**Satan** – The word Satan basically means “impure” and “low/worthless.” Satan refers to a rebellious entity, regardless of whether it is in human, animal or ghosts. Satan, according to the Islamic religion, can be considered “an abominable spirit that has distanced itself from Allah and the truth”.<sup>106</sup>

**Dabiq** – Dabiq is a city in Northern Syria. According to Islam, Dabiq will be the place where the final battle will take place between Islamic forces and their Christian enemies. In this case, ISIS interprets the US as the Christian enemy. Dabiq’s prophecy is similar to Christianity’s foretelling of a final battle between Christian and “anti-Christ” forces before God’s great victory.<sup>107</sup> Dabiq is also the name of the ISIS propaganda magazine.

**Jannah** – Arabic word for paradise, or heaven. The word Jannah is derived from an Arabic word meaning “to cover or hide something”. According to the Qur’an, Heaven is “the eternal life of peace and happiness after death, where the believers and the righteous will be rewarded”.<sup>108</sup>

**Al Qaida** – Al Qaida is derived from the Arabic word which means “Base” or “Foundation.” Al Qaida is a terrorist organization bent on fighting the international presence in Arab countries that militarily opposed the West’s foreign policy. Al

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105 For more, see Kosovo government strategy for prevention of violent extremism.

106 <https://www.al-islam.org/180-questions-about-islam-vol-2-various-issues-makarim-shirazi/7-what-meant-shaytan-noble-quran>

107 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30083303>

108 <https://www.thoughtco.com/definition-of-jannah-2004340>

Qaeda was founded by Osama bin Laden in 1988.<sup>109</sup>

**Taghut** - The word taghut is derived from the word "Tugyan" which means "to exceed the boundaries/limits." According to Islam, taghut is "anyone who exceeds the limits by ascribing to himself the rights that belong only to Allah and makes himself a partner with Allah." Taghut also means any worship of someone/something other than Allah, which is considered forbidden in Islam.<sup>110</sup> Secular states that do not function on the basis of Islamic religious principles are known as "taghut" by terrorist organizations. Terrorist organizations call on all Muslims to use all possible means to fight the state of taghut, and to apply Islamic religious principles in the functioning and governance of the state.

**Sustainable communities** - the active engagement of the community and different actors equipped with the basic knowledge and mechanisms to prevent and fight violent extremism. This also includes the attitude of the community towards such a phenomenon and their reaction to violent activity or the events that lead to such activities.

**Sham – Sham** – is the Arabic name which encompasses the region of Syria (present-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Palestine and part of southern Turkey) following the conquest of this region by Arabs, which until the 7th century was part of the Byzantine.

**Cross bearers** - The propaganda of the so-called "Islamic State" and their supporters constantly refers to the Western world as "cross bearers." According to them, the crusaders are those who throughout history have aimed to destroy Islam and continue to oppress Muslims worldwide. The narrative of "cross bearers" does not have any solid historical basis, however, it constitutes a strong propaganda element since the use of this term in a negative connotation aims to mobilize a critical mass to "counter the oppression" of Muslims around the world.

**Munafik** - Muslim believers refer to those who deny their religion and God as munafik. They are considered hypocrites and dangerous to Islam.

**Takfir – Takfir** – is a theological statement that refers to someone who denies his religion, a non-believer or an act or idea that constitutes disbelief in Islam. Being a takfir is a very serious matter in Islam as it is considered a major sin that will have consequences in the afterlife.<sup>111</sup>

**Suicide attacks** - are among the frequent methods that ISIS and other terrorist groups have used to attack countries and citizens in the Middle East, the West,

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109 <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-qaeda>

110 <http://from.the.depths.of.darkness.into.light.over-blog.com/article-71795909.html>

111 <http://www.css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/articles/article.html/316b8048-d26a-44cb-b4ce-48d8167f1e7c/pdf>

and elsewhere. It is a well-known tactic used by ISIS recently following the heavy losses it has suffered at the hands of Iraqi and Syrian security forces as well as US-led coalition attacks against ISIS and other terrorist groups active in Syria and Iraq. Before being used by terrorist groups in the Middle East, suicide attacks were carried out by Japanese pilots during World War II and by Tamil guerrillas in Sri Lanka.

**Secular State** – When a state is neutral in terms of religion, it does not oppose or support any religion, religious practices or activities, but at the same time it guarantees and ensures the right to practice the religion without any discrimination. A secular state treats its citizens equally, regardless of belief in a particular religion or non-belief.

**The Secular State according to ISIS** – Terrorist organizations like ISIS and their supporters strongly oppose secular states. According to them, Muslims should not be governed by “infidels” and even promote the idea of not fulfilling financial obligations to the state, not educating children in public schools or banning employment in secular state institutions, as this, according to them, helps the war against Islam. They oppose the idea of secularism because they consider it to be contrary to the “Laws of Allah” and participation in the democratic processes of a state, such as elections, constitutes a reprehensible act.<sup>112</sup>

**Disengagement** – Disengagement or withdrawal from violent extremist behavior and ideology of radicalized individuals or those who have supported the cause of terrorist organizations. This disconnection can be done in two forms. First, through the distancing of the violent extremist after a process of self-awareness that he/she embraced a wrongful cause following a social denunciation, or second, through institutional programmatic interventions for de-radicalization.<sup>113</sup>

**Interventions** – intervention primarily refers to institutional programs specifically designed to prevent further radicalization of individuals and their involvement in violent extremist causes. These interventions can vary, ranging from vocational programs to strategic communication campaigns that aim to raise awareness of the damage that violent extremism causes.<sup>114</sup>

**Foreign fighter** – an individual who travels to a conflict zone to join the war parties and terrorist organizations. In the context of the Islamic State, it is believed that from 2012 until the defeat of this group in 2017, about 40,000 foreign fighters from 120 countries joined ISIS and most of them lived under the rule of this organization. More than 200 Kosovo citizens have joined this organization.

**The West** – in the language of ISIS and its members, the West as a homogeneous

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112 [http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Fushebetejat\\_e\\_reja\\_Aktiviteti\\_i\\_grupeve\\_ekstremiste\\_on-line\\_900090.pdf](http://www.qkss.org/repository/docs/Fushebetejat_e_reja_Aktiviteti_i_grupeve_ekstremiste_on-line_900090.pdf)

113 Council of Europe, 2016, Handbook.

114 Ibid.

territorial, ideological and political entity represents “evil.” In ISIS propaganda, the West is depicted as the main enemy of Muslims, an infidel and sinful entity, and a force that must be resisted and fought.

**The Imperialist West** – Similar to above, ISIS has portrayed the West as a force that seeks to corrupt Islam, weaken it and adapt it to its own interests, particularly by weakening resistance to resource exploitation and cultural dominance in a worldview akin to a clash of civilizations. In the ISIS propaganda and that of other terrorist groups with an Islamist agenda, the West, which includes Christians, the USA and the Arab states, represents a negative, corrupt force.<sup>115</sup>

**Islam under attack** – This slogan is an essential part of the ISIS propaganda and similar terrorist and extremist groups with an Islamist agenda. It serves to legitimize violence and acts of terrorism supposedly in defense of Islam in its bid to secure the support and mobilization of Muslims by invoking their religious identity to consolidate their territorial control as a step towards building an Islamic Caliphate (state) governed on the basis of their interpretation of Islamic law (Sharia). These organizations portray Islam as a civilization that is threatened by the corrupting influence of the West. They use examples of Islamophobia or the clashes between religion and the secular state in the public sphere, especially in European countries, to build the argument that Islam as a religion and way of life for millions of Muslims around the world is being deliberately attacked by Christians and non-believers.

**Headscarf or Niqab** – the headscarf, often called hijab in Arabic, is considered by many Muslim believers as an obligation, worn by Muslim women from when they reach puberty. The hijab covers the head and neck, while niqab, another veil used by Muslim women, covers most of the face, leaving only the eyes open. This type of covering has its roots in the expression of religiosity, although it remains unclear whether it is an explicit requirement of the Koran or a matter of its interpretation. In the last decade, the headscarf has become part of many polarizing identity debates in Europe, including in the context of fundamental human rights, but also of liberal values and freedoms such as the right to exercise religious freedoms and the secular character of the state that sees the state and its institutions separated from religion and its influence.

**Active vs Passive Extremism** – Active and passive extremism in the context of terrorism usually refers to the role of the state as an actor in indirectly allowing or intentionally sponsoring extremist organizations. By indirect permission, we mean the passive behavior of state institutions, i.e. the failure to take measures in enacting laws to prevent the creation of these terrorist groups, the mobilization of support, the recruitment of supporters or the construction of financial and

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115 For more, see Baele, S. et al in “ISIS’ Clash of Civilization,” 2019, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, [https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10871/36626/IsisWest\\_MainArticle.pdf;jsessionid=8136E61F-7D438286545EE277A90BBEF2?sequence=1](https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10871/36626/IsisWest_MainArticle.pdf;jsessionid=8136E61F-7D438286545EE277A90BBEF2?sequence=1)



recruiting infrastructure.<sup>116</sup> States are rarely intentional sponsors of terrorism, but there are cases, such as the example of Iran, whose state structures financially and militarily support terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and, more recently, Hamas in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, at the individual level, the difference between passive and active extremist is the decision of an individual to undertake concrete actions to achieve extremist goals. A passive extremist can be an individual who holds extremist worldviews, ideologically supports the goals of extremist groups and shares their views, and who consumes extremist content through literature or on social media, but who does not engage in activity to achieve those extremist goals. Meanwhile, an active extremist is an individual who joins an extremist group and uses violence to achieve the extremist group's goals or propagates extremist causes to sow intolerance and recruit supporters.

**Anti-semitizëm** – According to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), anti-Semitism is defined as “the specific perception of Jews, which can be expressed as hatred of Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism target Jews and non-Jews and their property, Jewish community institutions, and their religious sites.” Many countries consider anti-Semitic attacks to be criminal offences. According to the IHRA, these categories constitute anti-Semitism: calls or justifications for killing or persecuting Jews in the name of a radical ideology or because of religious extremist views; dehumanizing references or stereotyping accusations about Jews as a people or about the power of Jews as a group, in particular related to conspiracy myths about Jews as a world power or as controllers of the media, economy, government and other social institutions; accusations against the Jewish people that they are responsible for the wrongdoing of a Jew or a certain group of Jews; denial of the genocide/Holocaust against the Jews by Nazi Germany and its supporters during World War II; accusations against Jews as more loyal to Israel and its interests than to the countries in which they live and work; the denial of the Jewish right to self-determination (calling the establishment of the state of Israel a racist enterprise), the application of double standards that are not required by other democratic states; the use of symbols and images associated with classical anti-Semitism (such as the classification of Jews as Christ-killers) to describe Israel; drawing parallels between Israel's current policy and the Nazis and collectively blaming Jews for the actions of the state of Israel.<sup>117</sup>

**Politicization of religion** – most democratic states are secular states and their constitutions or governing traditions do not treat a particular religion or religious doctrine as an official religion. Secularism also means the exercise

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116 Byman, Daniel L. 2005. “Confronting Passive Sponsors of Terrorism,” The Saban Center for Middle Eastern Policy at Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/by-man20050201.pdf>

117 For more, see Oxford's Bibliographies <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism>

of religious belief in the private sphere and its separation from the shared public sphere. These states treat their citizens, and therefore their religions or religious affiliations, as equal. Secularism also means a separation between state institutions and religious institutions and their non-involvement in each other's affairs. However, many secular states invoke God as inspiration either in guaranteeing equal rights among people or in other moral matters.

In the context of violent extremism and radicalization, when talking about the politicization of religion, it usually refers to its manipulation through interpretations that suit the political and ideological goals of individuals and organizations that proclaim such manipulation. The manipulation of religion often creates social polarization that manifests itself in intolerance and violence.

**Political Islam** – according to the University of Oxford (Oxford Bibliographies),<sup>118</sup> political Islam is any interpretation of the Islam that is used as a basis for political identity and political activity, including by political movements which aim to mobilize support by appealing to Islam.

**Pluralist Muslims** – are devout Muslims who believe in the diversity of identities in a society and show tolerance for other religions. These believers do not see a contradiction between their faith and the values of the secular state, which promotes diversity.

**Traditional Albanian Islam** – we find it often used as a term to describe the coexistence and harmony of Islam and the secular state during the time when Kosovo was part of socialist Yugoslavia and the alignment of the religious leaders with the country's political movements' national political agenda of liberation and the independence of Kosovo in the 1990s. In essence, traditional Albanian Islam has its roots in the Hanefi school of interpretation of Islam that came to the region through the Ottoman Empire. This school of Islamic interpretation is noted for its tolerance of other faiths and its openness toward shared liberal values, including harmony with the secular state and religion's non-imposition on others.<sup>119</sup>

**Moderate imams** – researchers of religious extremism define as "moderate imams" those religious leaders who do not support the misinterpretation of Islam and do not promote the conservative and violent goals of Islamist organizations. The moderate imams believe in coexistence with other religions and are committed to tolerance towards other faiths and non-believers, as well as try to oppose the causes and ideologies that legitimize the achievement of political and ideological goals with violence. These imams do not see the secular state and democracy in conflict with the foundations of Islam

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118 For more, see Oxford's Bibliographies <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0063.xml>

119 See in Hamiti's "What do we understand with traditional Islam?" <https://albemigrant2011.wordpress.com/2014/01/16/profesor-xhabir-hamiti-eka-nenkuptohet-me-islam-tradicional/>

**Moderate Islam** – although it does not exist as a distinct influence within Islam, in studies of violent extremism and radicalization such a concept has been used to distinguish between the majority of devout Muslims who oppose the use of violence to achieve political and ideological goals, and those Muslims who promote violence as a political tool. This term is somewhat contradictory and still imperfect due to the fact that no religion is moderate on its own since each one promotes its own absolute truths.

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