



PROCMURA REPORT

THE KENYA CHURCH LEADERS SEMINAR ON COUNTERING RADICALISATION AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

NAIROBI CENTRAL OFFICE,
19TH-21ST SEPTEMBER 2016

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1.0 Introduction

Radicalisation and violent extremism have become extremely important subjects in Africa in the wake of several terror attacks where religion has been implicated. PROCMURA has been in the frontline in creating awareness on the contextual events which act as enablers or fertile ground for the establishment and spread of radicalisation which may lead to violent extremism.

In 2014, PROCMURA set up a series of workshops for church leaders, women, and youth in its visionary mandate of working towards a continent where Christians and Muslims uphold the principles of interreligious peace; constructively relate to promote peace in the society and peaceful coexistence between Christian and Muslim communities as well as jointly respond to environmental challenges facing the society. These workshops were held mainly to build the capacity of the churches in Kenya to be able to counter radicalisation and violent extremism.

As a follow up and based on the request by the church, PROCMURA within its core mandate as captured in its strategic plan brought together church leaders from different denominations between 19th – 21st September 2016, in order to create awareness on the philosophy and theology of the extremists as well as the art of inter faith relations.

This report is therefore an overview of the said seminar.

2.0 Acknowledgements

We want to begin by thanking our partners in this vocation for accompanying us always in prayers particularly as this work continues to become more complex each day. We want to in a specific way thank the Church in Kenya for facing up to the challenge, Danmission for supporting this specific project with prayers and resources. We would also like to thank the participants in this project, for availing themselves for such a worthy cause to the glory of God.

3.0 Participants

The participants were drawn from a diverse church backgrounds and traditions and institutions as listed below: The Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church(KELC), The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK), Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK),

Christ Chapel Ministries, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), Methodist Church in Kenya, the Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), Friends Church (Quakers), Reformed Church of East Africa (RCEA), Kenya Methodist University (KEMU), African Christian Churches and Schools (ACC&S), African Church of the Holy Spirit (A.C.H.S), African Orthodox Church of Kenya, Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church (AEPC), Organisation of Africa Instituted Churches (OAIC). Twenty-seven (27) delegates participated, plus five facilitators making a total of 32.

4.0 Facilitators

The Seminar was facilitated by five facilitators; Four Christians and one Muslim. They included; Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, the General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Joseph Mutei, the Incoming General Adviser, PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Gibson Lesmore, Program Officer, Dr. Abdulkadir Hashim, Senior Lecturer at Nairobi University and Ms Florence Iminza who is a Program Assistant in PROCMURA.



Some of the facilitators standing from Right-Left, General Adviser; Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah, Sheikh Dr. Abdulkadir Hashim, Rev. Dr. Joseph Mutei, and Florence Iminza

5.0 Welcome and Introductions

Echoing the words ‘working for peace’, Ms. Joy Wandabwa the Team Leader, Finance and Administration welcomed the participants to PROCMURA and

particularly for the programme in place. Her opening remarks recounted the Church's role as seen in the recent events in Kenya and beyond. She noted that the church had done well to help restrain the Christian fraternity from reacting to violence when the militants seemed to target the Christian Community. She entreated that the seminar as planned was a conscious effort towards building the capacity of the church leaders to work for peace and to know how to constructively engage with the Muslim community. The session ended with participants doing self-introductions that included name, church affiliation and location.



Standing (in front) is the Team Leader- Finance and Administration, Ms. Joy Wandabwa extending welcome remarks to the participants and leading them to self introduction

6.0 Devotions

As is the custom with all PROCMURA programmes each of the two days began with a short Biblical reflection.



A section of the participants in a morning Devotion

The first day's devotion was led by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Julius Wanyoike of the Anglican Church of Kenya, Thika Diocese. His reflection had the theme 'Wisdom in Christ' based on I Corinthians 1:18-2:1-5.

In his reflection he recounted how in recent times, the churches in Kenya have been compelled to deploy several measures to secure their worship places including, sniffer dogs as well as armed security personnel, since 'the places of worship have become targets by violent extremists.' This he said was the extent to which radicalisation and violent extremism had destroyed the freedom and liberty that was previously enjoyed in the country. He called on the church through the wisdom of Christ and in the power of the Cross to further the cause of Christ in pursuit of peace which yields security.

On the second day, the devotion was led by Rt. Rev. Bishop Zachariah Kahuthu of the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC). He read from the Gospel according to Luke 12.

As if recapitulating all that was learnt on the previous day, he called on the church to live up to its responsibility and calling in the midst of a tumultuous world, in order to be the light of the world.



Rt. Rev. Bishop Julius Wanyoike leading the Devotion of the first day



Rt. Rev. Bishop Zachariah Kahuthu leading the Devotion on the second day

7.0 Seminar Speakers' Presentations

The presentations were variously made on the relevant topics as related to the theme of the day; 'Radicalisation and Violent Extremism'.

Each and every presentation was followed by a question and answer session where participants sought clarification for deeper understanding, as well as providing room for sharing personal experiences in the respective topics covered.

In total, ten presentations were made as follows:

Presentation #1: Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Who They Are and What They Stand for; by Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah

This presentation looked at the various extremist groups in Africa as well as those outside of Africa but with influence in Africa.



Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah making a presentation

Presentation #2: Islam and Muslim Intervention on Radicalisation and Violent Extremism by Sheikh Dr. Abdulkadir Hashim, Senior Lecturer at the University of Nairobi.

The presentation demonstrated how radicalisation and violent extremism is a problem to the Muslims as much as it is for Christians and other citizens of the continent at large. Consequently, there was need for the Christian and Muslim community to work together to counter radicalisation and violent extremism. While the Muslims had identified the key texts that are misquoted by the extremist groups, he saw an important role to be played in properly presenting these texts to the Muslim communities to avoid young people being lured into radicalisation.



Sheikh Dr. Abdulkadir Hashim making a presentation

Presentation #3: The Process of Radicalisation and the Case of Al Shabaab in East Africa by Rev. Dr. Joseph Mutei.

The presentation emphasised that radicalisation is not an event but a process that grows from a simple interest that develops to deep absorption into the extremists' teachings. Emphasis was put on the Christian teaching and discipling as well as living the Christian church values, to counter the ignorance that would lead to young people leaving the church into radicalisation or reacting out of ignorance.



Rev. Dr. Joseph Mutei making a presentation

Presentation #4: The Influence of Boko Haram by Rev. Dr. Ezekiel Gibson Lesmore

The presentation gave an overview of the history and activities of Boko Haram and how they have affected Christian-Muslim relations in the region as well as in the continent. The emphasis was that all should be involved in countering radicalisation in order to avoid acts of violent extremism.



Rev. Dr. Ezekiel Gibson Lesmore making a presentation

Presentation #5: Radicalisation, Violent Extremism: A Reflection on Youth and Women, Florence Iminza

The presentation highlighted the effects of radicalisation and violent extremism on women and the youth in Africa. Unlike the past where women were only the victims, she warned of the new phenomenon where women and children are now being radicalised into joining violent extremist groups as combatants and therefore counter radicalisation programmes should also target the two groups.



Ms. Florence Iminza making a presentation

Presentation #7: The Use/Misuse of Scripture as the Foundational Base for Extremism and Radicalisation by Rev. Dr. Joseph Mutei

The presentation pointed out that the extremists' ideology is buttressed in the misuse/misinterpretation of religious texts. The presenter sampled both biblical and Qur'ānic texts that have been used and misused historically and in contemporary times by the violent extremist groups to achieve their egoistic goals. He concluded that there was a dire need to reread and properly handle religious texts to offer counter narratives in place of the misappropriated texts.

Presentation #8: PROCMURA Approach to Christian-Muslim Relations by Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah

While stating that PROCMURA is not a product of 9/11, the presentation gave an overview of PROCMURA's foresight since its formation in 1959. He emphasised that the forefathers and mothers of PROCMURA appear to have envisioned that Islam and Christianity would always form part and parcel of the religious landscape of Africa and that if the two religions were at peace within themselves and among each other Africa will have peace. The contrary would spell disaster for the continent.

The vision, mission and overall goal of PROCMURA were shared thereby showing the unique, relevant and timely approach in handling Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa.

Presentation #9: The Culture of Just Peace by Rev. Dr. Ezekiel Gibson Lesmore

In accentuating the meaning and importance of peace, the presenter emphasised that all have to work for peace, expressly inter religious peace. However, peace has always to be accompanied by her twin, 'justice' to the culmination for peace to be realised, the greater good should and must be sought by all and sundry, hence the saying; 'peace for some is peace for none'.

Presentation #10: Guidelines for Christian-Muslim Relations in the Midst of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism by Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah

The presentation began by providing an overview of the religious landscape in Africa, indicating that today there is no country in Africa without Muslim and Christian presence.

The guidelines for Christian-Muslim Relations for Africa as proposed by PROCMURA were presented with the main aim of Christian witness that respects the spirit of good neighbourliness and Christian constructive engagement with Muslims for peace in society and peaceful coexistence between the two communities.

8.0 The Role of the Church in Countering Radicalisation and Violent Extremism.

The church leaders drawn from the diverse church backgrounds as mentioned earlier, outlined the following as some of what they saw as their role in countering radicalisation and violent extremism in the region:

- ✓ Put in place programmes to counter radicalisation
- ✓ Provide spaces for counter radicalisation programmes in their respective churches
- ✓ Build communication systems and engage the media fraternity to ensure that the information sent out did not degenerate the matter further.
- ✓ That the church will take seriously its parenting, education and discipleship roles.
- ✓ Members underlined the importance of partnering and Networking with PROCMURA in order to get solid expert advice on the different programs, especially in seeking deeper and wider understanding (Knowledge) of the other.

- ✓ Church leaders committed themselves to take part in PROCMURA's short courses on countering radicalisation and violent extremism.
- ✓ That the church will make use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and more contemporary media in reaching out to her constituencies with proper information.
- ✓ Establish youth, children, women and men programmes that will encourage learning, information sharing and mentorship in the Christian circles.
- ✓ Engage with all national stakeholders, including the government, the legal fraternity and civil society, in order to adopt appropriate policies for prevention of the radicalisation process and not enablers of violent extremism.
- ✓ Ensure that all churches have at least one or two persons trained in the area of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations to facilitate internal awareness creation on the matter.

9.0 Conclusion

The Church Leaders Seminar in Kenya as provided in this report was an attempt to scale up the Christian effort towards countering radicalisation and violent extremism. We hope and pray that the few seeds that were broadcast can find fertility in the hearts and minds of the churches and beyond, even as the church leaders commit themselves to this important and demanding course; with the hope that it will eventually, like in the parable of the Mustard Seed grow to a big tree where birds build their nests to find shelter for peace and peaceful coexistence among Christians and Muslims in Africa and worldwide.

III Photo Gallery



A section of the participants in a morning devotion session



Some of the participants had brief moments to share



Participants in session



Rev. Dr. Ezekiel G. Lesmore leading participants to observe a moment of silence in prayer for the international day of peace



L-R, Johannes Löffler (KELC) and Rt. Rev. Bishop Zachariah Kahuthu (KELC) share moments together



Participants having some refreshments



Standing, The General Adviser of PROCMURA, Rev. Dr. Johnson Mbillah speaking specifically to Rt. Rev. Bishop Julius Wanyoike



In the middle, one of the delegates, Ms. Emily Getrude Baraza, (Catholic Church, Kayole) making a point