2016 United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week Event Report: Voices of Moderate Islam

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." UNESCO Constitution 1946

Event Name: Voices of Moderate Islam

<u>Event Description</u>: Initiated on 24 August 2010 and continuing through today, the Voices of Moderate Islam (VoMI) is a multi-faceted Strategic Communications initiative aimed at highlighting the values and beliefs of Islam through a series of multi-faith seminars, symposiums, and conferences.

Event Goal: VoMI aims to educate people who have received only a singular view of Islam through the messages and actions of radical extremist organizations.

Event Manager: Brigadier General Aref Al-Zaben, Jordanian Armed Forces/Arab Army

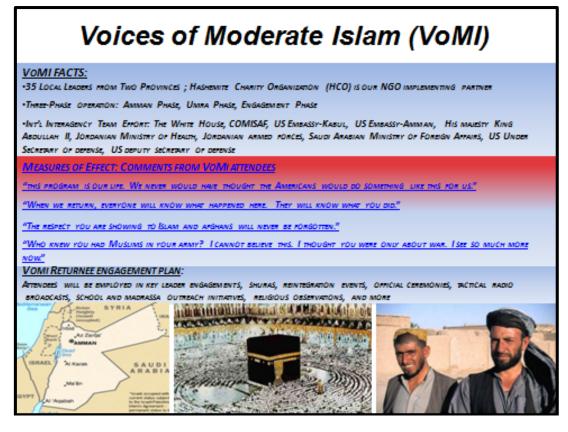
Event Point of Contact: Mr. Jim Johnson

Event Summary:

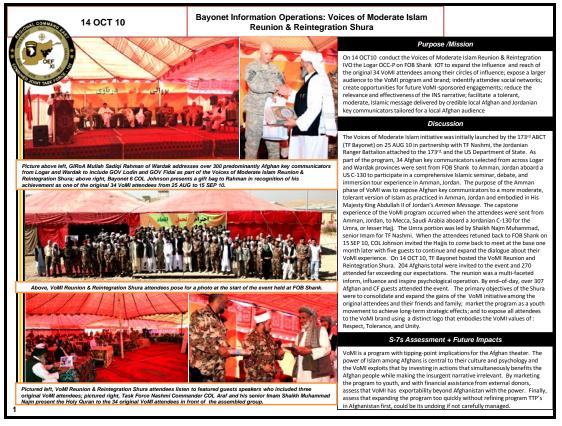
VoMI has been in effect for over five years and has included over 100 events in multiple countries. This program is a multi-faceted serious of events that stretches across varied institutions and segments of society. Born from intellectual analysis of why radical extremism was so deeply rooted in areas of global conflict, Voices of Moderate Islam (VoMI) was first initiated in Afghanistan in 2010. This program brought 40 Afghan local leaders who were under the influence of Taliban radical extremism to Amman, Jordan for religious discussions and than to the Umrah in Mecca. The principles of VoMI were validated as the Cycle of Failure was reversed in two Afghan provinces. The VoMI Program is nested with the efforts established with The Amman Message. Issued in 2005 by H.M. King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein in Amman, Jordan. The Amman Message sought to declare what Islam is and what it is not, and what actions represent it and what actions do not. Its goal was to clarify to the modern world the true nature of Islam and the nature of true Islam.

Event Highlights:

- Event #1: From 24 August 2010 to 14 September 2010, the VoMI Program took 40 Afghan local leaders who where under the influence of Taliban radical extremism to Amman, Jordan for religious discussions and education. While in Amman, they met with His Majesty, King Abdullah II, who personally reinforced the values of the Amman Message. The Afghan leaders were exposed to an environment where multi-faith harmony exists and creates an environment of spiritual enrichment for all. The Afghan leaders also came to understand the beliefs of Traditionalist Islam, to which they were not exposed to in Afghanistan. From Jordan, they traveled to Mecca for the Umrah. Upon returning to their communities as Hajji, these leaders reversed the cycle of frustration that was fueling conflict and war. After this event casualty rates and attacks on coalition forces dropped 450% in the communities of these Afghan leaders.



- *Event #2*: On 10 October 2010, VoMI conducted a Reunion & Reintegration Ceremony in Afghanistan to expand the influence and reach of the original 34 VoMI attendees among their circles of influence. The event also exposed a larger audience to the VoMI program and message. Overall it reduced the relevance and effectiveness of the radical extremist narrative and facilitated a tolerant, moderate, Islamic message delivered by credible local Afghan and Jordanian key communicators tailored for a local Afghan audience.



Event Report: Voices of Moderate Islam

Event #3 - On 15 November 2010, VoMI hosted its first Interfaith Harmony Event in Logar Province, Afghanistan. This powerful event built upon the initial gains of the first two events. This event grew into a quarterly annual event that has grown and continued in various countries to include the United States and Jordan.



- 100+ Continuous Events 2010-2016: What started as a program to mitigate the risk of radical extremism in an area of conflict has grown into an international program that stretches across many institutions and many different parts of society. The VoMI message has been effective in the Middle East and in Western countries. The VoMI message has impacted potential terrorists, as well as hearing impaired children in Jordan. The VoMI message has had a lasting effect on religious leaders to engage in a dialogue based on two common fundamental religious Commandments; Love of God, and Love of the Neighbor, without nevertheless compromising any of their own religious tenets. Top 20 events from the 100+ events are listed below:

| Event | Location | Participants |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Initial Event - Umrah | Jordan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia | 35 |
| VoMI Reunion | Afghanistan | 145 |
| Interfaith Harmony | Afghanistan | 80 |
| VoMI Initiative | Italy, Germany | 80 |
| VoMI Review -US Naval War College | USA | 175 |
| VoMI Review- US National Defense | USA | 250 |
| University | | |
| Kuwaiti Staff College Seminar | Kuwait | 125 |
| Arab Thought Foundation | Morocco | 750 |
| US National Defense University | Jordan/USA/multi-national | 125 |
| Symposium hosted by King Abdullah | | |
| II Special Operations Center | | |

Event Report: Voices of Moderate Islam

| Event | Location | Participants |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| "Countering Radicalism: | USA | 150 |
| Implementing the Amman Message | | |
| from Afghanistan and Beyond," at the | | |
| Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic | | |
| Studies Program at Harvard | | |
| University | | |
| US Naval Academy | USA | 225 |
| Jordan Defense College and Geneva | Jordan/multi-national | 35 |
| Center for Strategic Policy | | |
| Al Bakr University | Jordan | 150 |
| Bahrain Staff College | Bahrain | 55 |
| Friends of National Security | Jordan | 75 |
| Organization | | |
| Sofia Security Conference | Bulgaria | 200 |
| Hand's of the Jordanian Youth | Jordan | 75 |
| Commission | | |
| Middle East University | Egypt | 45 |
| Egyptian Nasser Military Academy | Egypt | 45 |
| Al Amal Elementary School of the | Jordan | 35 |
| Hearing Impaired | | |

Event POC: Mr. Jim Johnson, jhjohnson3@gmail.com , +962-790139054