World Summit on Counter-Terrorism: Terrorism’s Global Impact

It takes a network to beat a network,” said Dr. Boaz Ganor, Ronald S. Lauder chair for Counter-Terrorism, deputy dean, Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy & Strategy, and founder and executive director, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Israel, speaking at the opening of the 13th Annual Conference on Global Terrorism. Dr. Ganor described how ICT’s world summit on counter-terrorism provides a dynamic platform for over 800 leading experts and decision-makers to network, establish essential cooperation and exchange views on the challenges faced by counter-terrorism officials. Scheduled to coincide with and commemorate the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America, the conference has received worldwide acclaim since its inception.
Prof. Uriel Reichman, founder and president of the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, proudly told participants in his welcoming address that this year's conference marked two oldstyle years of IDC Herzliya. He said that IDC Herzliya has brought a revolution to education in Israel, as it is the first private academic institute and trains the future leadership of Israel. Prof. Reichman spoke of the dark days of the Second Intifada, when terrorist attacks occurred in Israel on a regular basis. He recalled the 2002 suicide bombing of the Park Hotel in Netanya, in which the parents and grandparents of Shirley Fried, an IDC Herzliya student at that time, were tragically killed.

Reichman explained that the intifada brought about the feeling that Israel had no partner in peace, noting that Israel still faces a "non-stop war" and that the surrounding region is filled with violence. However, he said that despite the atrocities, we must believe in a different solution, one of negotiations, as terrorism only brings about human suffering.

This year’s conference took place as the Israeli government was entering new peace talks with the Palestinians, and therefore according to Reichman, it is imperative that we “not forget the blessed memory of those who lost their lives to terrorism.” It was also a great honor that Lt. Gen. (Ret.) MK Moshe (Bogie) Yaalon, minister of Defense, Israel, said in his keynote speech about Syria, “We are preparing for the consequences of American action or inaction,” declaring that, “there will be consequences for us no matter the decision.”

Let us remember the innocent civilians murdered by suicide bombers who did not distinguish between civilians of Israel. All in the name of Allah.

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Unless red lines that we set are crossed....The Syrian regime knows that those who challenge us will meet the IDF’s military capability.”

- Lt. Gen. (Ret.) MK Moshe Bogie Yaalon, minister of Defense, Israel

(ID to r) Prof. Uriel Reichman, founder and president, IDC Herzliya, Israel, with Hava and Shimon Topor, longtime friends and supporters of IDC Herzliya.

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This year’s world summit illustrated an underlying need for widening the counter-terror professional network in order to reinforce the counter-terrorist operational methods in an increasingly uncertain and radicalized world. Amongst the acclaimed speakers was Dr. Qanta Ahmed, associate professor of Medicine, State University of New York, and Templeton-Cambridge Journalism fellow in Science and Religion, University of Cambridge, United States of America, who fervently said: “I refuse to give up Islam to the Islamists.”

Ahmed began her speech during the plenary session, quoting an Islamist poem: “The mosques are our barracks; the minarets our bayonets; the domes are our helms, the believers are our soldiers.” She said that although this sounds like something out of the Al-Qaeda handbook, it was in fact an inflammatory speech, read out loud by the then-mayor of Istanbul in 1997. He was ejected from office and sentenced to jail by the Ankara High Court. However, today, that mayor, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is prime minister of Turkey, a country with which Israel once had a strong strategic alliance. Ahmed explained that Erdogan has slowly but relentlessly pushed secular Turkey, a member of NATO, towards a radical Islamist future. She noted that whilst Israel has long led the world in knowledge of Islamist jihadist ideology and its many complexities, it is taking Muslims everywhere far longer to recognize the consuming threat emerging from among them. From recent tensions in Turkey to the bloodshed in Egypt and Syria, it is the underlying struggle marking Islamist forces against secularists as well as Sunnis against Shias that is fueling the fire. Ahmed said, “Make no mistake, this conflict within Islam is originated by Muslims, is being waged by Muslims, and the vast majority of its victims are Muslims. These conflicts are deepening the abyss between major sects in Islam. Unless we confront Islamism or unless we castrate it, we will only see a region with pseudo-democracies.”

Major Dr. Bryan Price, executive director, Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy, West Point, United States of America, presented a fascinating study during the plenary sessions, in which he compared the holistic approach to treating cancer to that of combating terrorism: “We cannot say we can defeat terrorism, we cannot cure an incurable disease, but we can combat it more effectively.” He cited the recent example of the Boston Bombing attacks, noting failures found in the lack of collaboration between the authorities. He suggested that if an holistic approach would have existed, perhaps the attack might never have reached fruition. As Dr. Boaz Ganor remarked, international cooperation is the key to the counter-terrorism puzzle since, “Not all the agencies have all the parts.” Therefore, by disseminating knowledge, counter-terrorist professionals will have greater potential to coordinate all parts of the puzzle and prevent attacks. This was demonstrated by both speakers and participants from over 40 countries, comprised of: current and former ministers, members of parliaments, heads of security agencies and police departments, first responders, leading academics, professional experts in the field of counter-terrorism, jurists, businesspeople and students.
**Defying the Threats on an Operational Level**

Leading police and military experts described the challenges faced by law enforcement today. Commissioner **Yohanan Danino**, general commissioner of Police, Israel, described the special challenges Israel has to face with regards to criminality, accidents and terrorism. He noted how the Israeli police are always prepared to face threats, and able to act immediately from routine to emergency. He said: “We always tried to be prepared for every scenario and any threat.”

Ambassador **Yitzhak Levanon**, former ambassador to Egypt, senior associate, The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), and lecturer, IDC Herzliya, Israel, noted the importance of policing and the challenges he saw firsthand in the Sinai Peninsula due to the absence of police in the region. Gen. (Ret.) **John Abizaid**, distinguished chair, Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy, West Point, and former commander of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), United States of America, highlighted the importance of international collaboration between the authorities in the international community, commenting: “We need to internationally organize in order to deal with our enemy,” stressing that, “These challenges require international commitment for Counter-Terrorism, which will cast off intense pain on our enemies.”

This year the conference was privileged to enjoy a large British contingent, who shared their experiences and challenges. Assistant Commissioner **Cressida Dick**, assistant commissioner for Specialist Operations, Metropolitan Police, City of London, United Kingdom, claimed that the collaboration between the Metropolitan Police and British intelligence agency MI5 has significantly reduced the operational capability of terrorist groups. She noted that terrorist plots increasingly span multiple countries, and therefore the need for international collaboration is greater than ever. She also said: “Despite all our efforts, there is much we don’t understand, and we cannot and should not pretend we can reduce the risk of terror attacks to zero.”

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**ICT’s Project of Crafting Israel’s Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

This year, as a special feature of the conference, ICT was proud to launch Israel’s first Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Conference participants were privileged to preview this pioneering interim report, which ICT’s senior staff and fellows are crafting. This ambitious project examines central processes in Israel’s counter-terrorism policy in partnership and cooperation with over 60 Israeli academic experts and practitioners, divided into 12 committees, each tackling pressing counter-terrorism issues. These include: International Cooperation; Intelligence; Public Diplomacy; International Law and Criminal Justice; Offensive Action; Defensive Action; Prevention; Public Resilience; Cyber-Terrorism; External Threat; Threat from Within; and Terrorism Financing. The project was launched and introduced by Dr. Boaz Ganor during the opening day of the conference. According to **Dan Diker**, who heads the Public Diplomacy Committee, Israel faces a more complex challenge in its intensifying war against radical Islamic terror groups like Hamas and Hizballah, who have dual identities as “semi-terror, semi-government organizations.” This two-headed threat requires a multidimensional public diplomacy strategy, provided by ICT, as part of an overall counter-terror strategy by Israel.
The political events taking place in the Middle East provided an especially rich content for this year’s series of workshops, held on the last two days of the conference. The workshops provided an interactive opportunity for conference participants to discuss with expert panelists and draw conclusions about current issues, such as events in Syria and Egypt and the repercussions of the Arab Spring or “Arab Tsunami,” as it is so often referred to by leading speakers, including Maj. Gen. (Res.) Aharon-Ze’evi Farkash, former head of IDF Military Intelligence.

The series of workshops held on September 10th were devoted to terrorist actors and their ideologies: the cornerstone of the terrorist threat. During these sessions, participants were able to ask questions of leading experts on topics such as the threat of the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip and how to counter communications and incitement. The workshop, “From A-Z: Al-Qaeda Central and its Affiliates” was held in memory of Lt. Col. Emmanuel Moreno (z’l), former IDC law alumus, killed in the Second Lebanon War. During this workshop, leading army lawyers and academics from around the world, including Lt. Col. Chris De Cock, a senior Belgian army lawyer; Judge Jean-Louis Bruguieres, former head, Counter-Terrorism Unit, Paris District Court and former leading French magistrate for Investigating Counterterrorism, France; and Prof. Marco Sassoli, professor and director, the Department of Public International Law and International Organization, the University of Geneva, Switzerland, explained the legal issues of humanitarian rights when prosecuting militants and described how to keep international law relevant to the complex battlefield scenarios of the 21st century. Other workshops in this series addressed various tactics, strategies and modus operandi currently being used by various groups, including home-grown terrorism, cyber-terrorism and pharma-terrorism.

The series of workshops on September 11th were dedicated to the broader context within which contemporary forms of terrorism thrive. The workshop, “Failed States and Under-Governed Territories in the Arab and Islamic World,” was held in memory of Major Eyal Ragonis (z’l) (958-1995). Ragonis served as an intelligence officer in elite units, including the Chief of Staff’s Corps (Sayeret Matkal), and excelled in planning and execution. Participants in these workshops had the opportunity to discuss the challenges of counter-terrorism due to the evolving conception of the nature of the enemy, regional development changes and dilemmas faced by democracies. The workshop on “Defining Terrorism: A Fundamental Counter-terrorism Measure” was held in memory of Prof. Ehud Sprinzak (z’l), who was the founding dean of the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy & Strategy at IDC Herzliya. He was a world-renowned researcher and lecturer on topics of public affairs, religion and fundamentalism, violence and terrorism in Israel, the Middle East and the US.

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The workshop, “Contending with Counter-Terrorism Strategies and Approaches” was held in memory of Lt. Col. Emmanuel Moreno (z’l), former IDC law alumus, killed in the Second Lebanon War. During this workshop, leading army lawyers and academics from around the world, including Lt. Col. Chris De Cock, a senior Belgian army lawyer; Judge Jean-Louis Bruguieres, former head, Counter-Terrorism Unit, Paris District Court and former leading French magistrate for Investigating Counterterrorism, France; and Prof. Marco Sassoli, professor and director, the Department of Public International Law and International Organization, the University of Geneva, Switzerland, explained the legal issues of humanitarian rights when prosecuting militants and described how to keep international law relevant to the complex battlefield scenarios of the 21st century. Other workshops in this series addressed various tactics, strategies and modus operandi currently being used by various groups, including home-grown terrorism, cyber-terrorism and pharma-terrorism.
Unfortunately, the threat of global terrorism and the diversity of modus operandi used by the terrorist groups are constantly evolving and not disappearing. Experts on Al-Qaeda such as Prof. Rohan Gunaratna, director, International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and Mr. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, director, Center for the Study of Terrorist Radicalization (CSTR), Foundation for Defense of Democracies, United States of America, noted that although the core leadership of Al-Qaeda has largely been defeated, its affiliated groups, such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Qaeda in Iraq (Islamic State of Iraq) amongst others, pose enormous and ongoing threats to Western society. Although counter-terrorism successes have occurred in recent years, the challenges remain, due to the evolving conception of the nature of the enemy; rapidly changing regional developments; terrorist actors’ persistent motivation to harm their enemies; and the dilemmas faced by democracies, in particular, that attempt to effectively confront the challenge of terrorism.

Iran and Hizballah: A Dangerous Team

The topic of the Iranian threat and Hizballah once again occupied much of the discussion at this year’s conference, especially due to the continued threat of the Iranian enrichment program and the recent European Union blacklisting of Hizballah, in which Dr. Eitan Azani, ICT deputy executive director, IDC, Herzliya, recently gave testimony before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament, Brussels. According to Dr. Boaz Ganor, the threat of a military nuclear Iran is much greater for Iran’s neighbors than for Israel, since Iran would use nuclear military capacity as deterrence to promote its interests in and beyond the region. However, Tarek Fatah, founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress, claimed that the threat posed by Pakistan and Islamabad’s nuclear activity was an even greater threat to Western society and especially Israel. He questioned why Israel’s media, think tanks and the Israeli government focus their attention towards the Iranian threat, rather than on the exponential threat from Pakistan. In his speech he noted that “Every terror incident, anywhere in the world, committed by Pakistani terrorists, is always pointed to as having to do with the State of Israel.”

Syria: To Bomb or Not to Bomb?

The conference was held against the backdrop of the US decision on whether or not to use military force against Syria, in light of President Assad’s alleged use of chemical weapons particularly following the August 21, 2013 attack in Damascus that killed over 1,400 civilians, including many children. During the conference, ICT presented a report that demonstrated, as of June 2013, that Syrian President Bashar Assad holds one of the world’s largest caches of mustard gas, sarin and the lethal nerve gas VX. The report described the manner in which President Assad attained his inventory as well as warning of the possibility that the unconventional munitions could fall into the hands of terrorist groups active in Syria. According to Dr. Ely Karmon, a senior ICT researcher, it is the responsibility of Israel and the US to prevent these arms from reaching Hizballah or rebels: “In such a case, the usage (of chemical weapons) would spiral out of control. No one could guarantee that there wouldn’t be future usage.”
Sinai: Egypt’s Wild West

The political instability in Egypt from Cairo to Sinai, particularly in the post-Mubarak era, occupied much discussion during the conference. According to Maj. Gen. (Res.) Amos Gilad, director, Policy and Political-Military Affairs, and chair, Security Relations with Regional and Strategic Partners, Ministry of Defense, Israel, there have been positive moves in Egypt to counter the Jihadist threat. He praised Egypt’s latest military operation against armed groups in the Sinai. He described Egyptian Defense Minister, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, as a new leader “that history will remember”, noting that he is combating the Muslim Brotherhood, a “movement that envelopes the region.” During the workshop, “The Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip: A Hub for Jihadists,” participants heard firsthand from Ambassador Yitzhak Levanon, former ambassador to Egypt, about the problems in the area, particularly regarding the cultural differences with the Bedouins, smuggling tunnels and absence of police. Panel chairman Col. (Res.) Jonathan Figel, Senior ICT researcher, and panelist Dr. Dan Schueftan, director, The National Security Studies Center, The University of Haifa, Israel, painted a somewhat worrying picture explaining that despite efforts by security forces to try and maintain law and order, the area continues to be lawless. This echoed recent remarks by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who described the Sinai Peninsula as the “Wild West” of the Middle East.

Cyber-Terrorism: Is the Western World Adequately Prepared to Respond to a Threat?

“We have not had the 9/11 yet in cyber, but it will come.” These were the predictions of Commissioner Adrian Leppard, commissioner of the City of London Police, United Kingdom, who said the Western world needs to brace itself for a cyber-attack of unprecedented proportions. Citing the examples of electronic jihad groups in Iran and Syria, Dr. Eitan Azani said that state-sponsored organizations had the best operational capabilities today of all those active in cyber-terrorism and therefore posed the biggest challenge to the West. Mauro Miedco, a senior official at the terrorism prevention branch of the United National Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, noted that approximately 90 percent of recent terror attacks have been prepared, planned and incited through the Internet: “The Internet today is the most powerful tool that terrorist organizations have at their disposal.” - Mauro Miedco, a senior official at the terrorism prevention branch of the United National Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna
9/11 Memorial Ceremony

In keeping with the conference’s tradition, a memorial ceremony was held on the evening of September 11, 2013, for the victims of 9/11 and of terrorism worldwide. H.E. Daniel Shapiro, ambassador of the United States to Israel, noted that no country has borne the threat of terrorism more than Israel and that the United States has learned and continues to learn from Israel’s expertise. He said that, “As terrorists adapt their methods of attack, we have also had to adapt – making use of new technologies, and at times creating them, in order to stay a step ahead of those who would do us harm.” He added that the US is proud to stand firmly as a partner with those who would do us harm.” He added that creating them, in order to stay a step ahead of making use of new technologies, and at times methods of attack, we have also had to adapt –

Gen. (Ret.) John Abizaid, distinguished chair, Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy, West Point, and former commander of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), United States of America, paid tribute to all those who lost their lives in 9/11 and other terrorist attacks. He reflected on his years in the US military and said his aim is to create a world in which his grandchildren will no longer have to face the evil that exists in the world today.

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