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Appeal of IS goes beyond religious persuasion

FROM **MOHAMED IDRIS KAMAL**

It is preposterous for the writer of the letter “Muslim-S’porean leaders must be proactive in reaching out to youth” (Nov 18) to suggest there has been a “self-imposed gag among Muslim Singaporeans on talking about jihad” since 9/11.

His view that Daesh, or the Islamic State (ISIS), has become the vanguard of jihad in Islam is simplistic and does not reflect the views of experts and scholars analysing trends in global terrorism.

Muslim scholars, leaders and groups here have made a concerted effort to define jihad within the parameters of the Syariah, or Islamic legal code. This is manifest in the Religious Rehabilitation Group initiative.

The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, Pergas, Darul Arqam, SimplyIslam, Sout Ilaahi and other organisations have also made a concerted effort to organise talks to combat the hateful message of Daesh and its ideological precursors such as Al Qaeda. The writer would do well to acquaint himself with what these organisations have done in this regard before making such generalisations.

I am also concerned about his naive effort to legitimise and bring credibility to Saudi Arabia in matters relating to Islam. While Arabia may be the “cradle of Islam”, modern Saudi Arabia, with the puritanical, intolerant version of Islam her scholars es-

pouse, is probably the main source of global terrorism.

Condemnation of Daesh from any quarter is welcome. Such a condemnation by Saudi scholars, however, is akin to pinching the baby and rocking the cradle. We should not forget that 15 of the 19 hijackers in the 9/11 attacks were Saudi citizens.

It is necessary to view current events with a historical lens that goes back to the 20th century, though in this age of 24-hour news cycles, hoping for such an effort may be wishful thinking. It is worth noting that the appeal of Daesh and other radical groups goes beyond religious persuasions.

RAND Corporation’s Brian Michael Jenkins writes: “Young men may be equally seduced by visions of adventure or they may want to escape the frustrations of life in the West. ISIS recruitment increasingly takes in impressionable young women and teenage girls attracted to jihadist bad boys, boasting about their bloody deeds.”

To paraphrase a researcher, most of Daesh’s young recruits have binding traits: They do not get along with their parents and have social issues; many have been in trouble with the police, have criminal backgrounds and have passed through the prison system. In short, they have little understanding of Islam. Also, their radicalisation happens away from their community, mosques and madrasahs.

It would be a mistake to simplify the appeal of Daesh for our youth.

Holistic assessment for youth on triage system

FROM **AILEEN TAN**

Deputy director, Probation Service, Rehabilitation and Protection Group, Ministry of Social and Family Development

We thank Mr Kwan Jin Yao for his feedback in “Quantify outcomes of intervention for at-risk youths” (Nov 10).

Under the new triage system, partnership between social service and law enforcement agencies will take place at an earlier juncture to assess youth offenders and their families.

Trained officers from selected social service agencies will work alongside police officers.

The assessments conducted will provide more comprehensive information on the offenders’ risks and needs, and enable us to decide the appropriate intervention for their rehabilitation. We will also be able to better connect vulnerable families to relevant community services.

In designing the system, we looked at our experience and that of other countries, such as the United Kingdom.

As Mr Kwan suggested, we will collect data and evaluate the effectiveness of the service, so that we can continue to improve its design.

“(The) view that Daesh, or the Islamic State (ISIS), has become the vanguard of jihad in Islam is simplistic and does not reflect the views of experts and scholars analysing trends in global terrorism.”

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