



# **Event Report: WOMEN AND JIHAD**

**6 April 2015**

**Auditorium**

**Dr. Kiran C. Patel Center for Global Solutions**

**University of South Tampa, FL**

The United States and other international actors are increasingly attentive to the different roles women play in violent extremism. This roundtable discussion will examine why women join violent extremist groups and the roles they play in ISIS and affiliated jihadists groups in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. In addition, we will examine the roles of women and women's organizations in preventative efforts.

## **Speakers Biographies**

### **Mr. Saad Alasadi**

Mr. Saad Alasadi was born and raised in southern Iraq. After participating in the 1991 uprising against Saddam he fled the country and lived in a refugee camp in Saudi Arabia for a year and a half. Mr. Alasadi moved to the United States in 1992.

Mr. Alasadi worked as the senior cultural advisor for Multinational Headquarters-Iraq in Baghdad from 2007-2011. In this position Saad advised Generals and the Director of Information Operation on cultural issues ranging from sectarianism to cultural and historical events. He travelled throughout the country and has a keen understanding tribal norms and women's role in the tribal culture. He worked at US Central Command from 2012 until 2014, as Arabic Social Media Analyst (Iraqi expert). Beginning in 2014 Mr. Alasadi has worked as the Assistant Editor for USCENTCOM's Magazine UNIPATH. In these positions he has worked on women's

motivational television shows, provided analysis on Jihadists web operations and analysis on how proxy militias operate in the Middle East and Levant regions.

Mr. Alasadi holds a bachelor's of science in computer science University of Basra, bachelor's of science in computer science from Cleveland States University and a master's degree in computer science from Arizona University.

### **Dr. Chantal de Jonge Oudraat**

Dr. Chantal de Jonge Oudraat has been President of Women in International Security (WIIS) since February 2013. She is also a Senior Advisor to the Center for Gender and Peacebuilding of the U.S. Institute of Peace and was the founding and executive director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) North America (2012-2014). Previous positions include: associate vice president and director of the U.S. Institute of Peace Jennings Randolph Fellowship Program; adjunct associate professor at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University; and senior fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University. She has also held senior positions at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, DC ; and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) in Geneva.

Her areas of specialization are: women, peace and security, gender, international organizations, arms control and disarmament, terrorism and countering violent extremism, peacekeeping, use of force, economic sanctions, U.S.-European relations, and women, peace and security.

Dr. de Jonge Oudraat is co-editor with Kathleen Kuehnast and Helga Hernes of *Women and War: Power and Protection in the 21st Century* (2011, USIP Press). Among her other publications are: "Sanctions in Support of International Peace and Security," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall, eds., *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World* (Washington, D.C.: USIP Press, 2007); "The Role of the Security Council," in Jane Boulden and Thomas Weiss, eds., *Terrorism and the UN: Before and After September 11th* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004); "Combating Terrorism," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Autumn 2003; and "Humanitarian Intervention: The Lessons Learned," *Current History*, Vol.99, No.641, December 2000

De Jonge Oudraat did her undergraduate studies at the University of Amsterdam and received her PhD in Political Science from the University of Paris II (Panthéon).

### **Ms. Amy Frumin**

Amy B. Frumin is a strategic planner and works on issues in the Middle East and South and Central Asia as an associate for Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH). Ms. Frumin focuses on stability and countering violent extremism. As an independent consultant, Amy designed and executed trainings for U.S. military and civilian personnel preparing to deploy to Afghanistan. Training topics included understanding the underlying causes of conflict, the Afghan Government structures, and the role of civilians on the battlefield. Prior to working as a consultant, Amy was an international affairs fellow in residence at the Council on Foreign Relations where she wrote and commented on the international humanitarian relief regime, Afghanistan, and the efficacy the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)'s work in unstable environments. Ms. Frumin returned from Panjshir, Afghanistan in 2007 where she was the USAID representative to the Provincial Reconstruction

Team. As one of three civilians on this mostly U.S. Air Force team, Ms. Frumin managed the USAID portfolio and offered the development perspective to project discussions with the military and the Department of State. Prior to working in Afghanistan, Ms. Frumin covered Latin America for USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI). From 2000-2001, Ms. Frumin worked as a political affairs officer in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations Mission in Kosovo. Amy also worked for UNICEF's Office of Emergency Operations. Additionally, she has been published by and worked for several think tanks, including the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the United Nations Association for the USA, and the World Policy Institute at the New School in New York City. Amy founded Women in International Security (WIIS) Chapter in Florida in 2014 and is the current president of WIIS-Florida. Ms. Frumin earned her BA in political science with a minor in international development at McGill University and her Masters of Science in Development Studies from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Amy is married with two daughters.

### **Dr. David Jacobson**

David Jacobson is the founding director of the Global Initiative on Civil Society and Conflict, and Professor of Sociology at the University of South Florida.

Born in South Africa, he received his graduate training at the London School of Economics and Princeton University. A political sociologist, he works in the areas of immigration and citizenship, international institutions and law, human rights, religion and conflict, and woman's status in global conflict. His book, *Of Virgins and Martyrs: Women and Sexuality in Global Conflict*, Johns Hopkins University Press, was recently released.

He is also leading a new project which will examine tribes and ethnic groups in Mali and Nigeria, and the sociological changes they are facing in the context of political, economic and security challenges in West and Sahelian Africa--in particular from Boko Haram and AQIM. The project includes extensive field work.

He has directed surveys across three continents. He also directs research teams in Europe and the United States, with a team in development for West Africa.

Professor Jacobson is also the author of, among other works, *Rights Across Borders: Immigration and the Decline of Citizenship and Place and Belonging in America*. He presented the Haar Lecture in International Sociology at Princeton University. He has had visiting appointments at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute, Sciences Po and the Leonard Davis Institute of International Relations.

### **Dr. Basimah Rowe**

Dr. Rowe is a strategic communication consultant with vast experience in the Middle Eastern social, political, economic, and cultural affairs. She is Sr. Communications Advisor at Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH). Prior to joining BAH, she worked as Senior Foreign Media Analyst for USSTRATCOM and CENTCOM providing analyses on governance, regional stability and counter-terrorism in the Middle East and Central Asia. She served as Regional Program Specialist with US State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, where she led more than 40 projects in Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) countries supporting a range of civil society programs [Educational, Economic, Women Empowerment, Political] conducted in United Arab

Emirates, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen and Qatar, Morocco, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Iraq.

Dr. Rowe also served as a Director of Educational and Psychological Counseling at Amran University, Yemen for six years. She also worked as a Counselor, Journalist, Researcher, and Professor.

Dr. Rowe conducted extensive researches of Middle East cultural, political, and social environments which include Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, and the Gulf countries. She participated with other researchers in the Al Mesbar Studies & Research Center's book: *"Islamists in the Gulf."* Other publications include: *"Yemen's national dialogue is blossoming online," "Al Qaida in Yemen,"* and *"Analyzing the terror threat to the U.S. after the Boston bombings,"* 2013 Al Arabiya Institute for Studies.

She earned her doctorate in Political and Social Psychology from Baghdad University and has BA and MA degrees in Cognitive and Social Psychology. Her area of specialties are: Strategic Communications, Knowledge Management, Open Source and Social Media Analysis, Counseling Psychology, Translation, Public Diplomacy, Advocacy and Campaigning, Women Empowerment, International Relations [Middle East & North Africa, and Proposals/Grants writing and evaluation.

## Event Description

Women are among the groups that have the most to lose if the Sunni Salafist groups, such as the Daesh (otherwise referred to as the ISIL or ISIS), succeed in spreading their extremist brand of Islam. For this reason it is often confounding to those of us enjoying the freedoms afforded western women, to understand why in some cases, women are supporting Daesh. On April 6 at USF's Patel Center the Florida Chapter of Women in International Security (WIIS) asked a group of four experts to help understand what role women and women's organizations are playing in the radicalization process.

The President of WIIS Global, Dr. Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, opened the discussion with an overview of the changing nature of the discussion on terrorism. In the years immediately after September 11, 2001, the U.S. spoke about countering terrorism using, mostly, the military to do so. Since then the discussion has evolved into one about countering violent extremism (CVE) against which a larger variety of tools can be applied. With this new conceptualization we can begin to look at the regressive gender norms that accompany the Sunni Salafist ideology. Dr. David Jacobson, from the USF department of sociology, noted that 68 percent of tribal violence can be tracked to the low status of women. In other words, regressive gender norms are a predictor of tribal violence.

More broadly, Dr. Jacobson's sociological perspective highlights the fact that women have been a motif in concepts of war throughout history. Women are considered the nexus of cultural reproduction and thus many cultures feel the need to control women. In addition, where we see big events, such as shifting modes of economic production, and there is movement among different status groups, the prospect for violence is increased. Globalization is no different.

The role women play in the radicalization process is location and demographic specific. According to Dr. Rowe, in Yemen, the Houthi women are considered in more traditional gender roles as wives and mothers. However, Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has worked to engage women for recruitment,

financial support and other activities such as moving prisoners. Forty percent of web recruitment is run by women. AQAP is attracting women by offering skills, financial aid, computer courses, etc.

Mr. Alasadi noted that in Iraq the women are also motivated to participate in extremist movements through financial aid and often are intimidated into participating. They are considered useful to the extremists because they have greater freedom of movement than do many of the men. Mr. Alasadi noted that the early years of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq were considered the golden era for women because he made education accessible to all and there was some mobility. However, it was Saddam who resurrected the practice of exchanging women to rectify transgressions among families. The woman would be held as a slave in other family's home until she produced a male heir.

What approach should the US and its partners take in addressing women in jihad?

All speakers spoke about the need to understand local drivers of violent extremism. Dr. Jacobson noted that we will never be able to come up with a profile of a violent extremist. What we need to do is segment the population and begin looking at broad social categories. For example, the work that has already been done in Europe shows that the profile of a violent extremist in France is a petty criminal, whereas in the UK the violent extremist is a university graduate. In addition, first generation immigrants to the west are the ones who are recurrently recruited to violent extremism. The female immigrants more often thrive in western societies. The men, on the other hand, are often pooling at the bottom, which can be emasculating especially in the highly patriarchal Muslim social structure. The frustrated young men are therefore vulnerable to radicalization.

Women in Iraq are accessible to the international community because much of the recruitment and indoctrination is happening via the internet. Dr. Rowe notes that it should be host nation governments and local civil society organizations that engage these women. In places like Bahrain, UAE and Saudi Arabia there are women's unions that could be useful in engaging the women.

Mr. Alasadi noted that we are not taking advantage of two other avenues to engage these women. One is by using successful Iraqi women as role models and examples of women who have managed to break out of the regressive gender norms to become important as women in their own right. Women like Malala Yousafzai (the Nobel Prize winning Pakistani girl who was shot by the Taliban while advocating for girl's education) are a direct affront to the radical Muslim ideology. Mr. Alasadi also suggested working with the victims of the conflict, as women are often these victims. During our operations in Iraq the US was focused on the enemy. The victims, including the women and children, were repeatedly overlooked. AQ was able to step into this space to win the support of these victims. In the same way there is an opportunity to access those women/victims who have been widowed by violent extremists activity/foreign fighters.

The international community must continue to try to understand this under-studied field of women in conflict. Women are playing various roles in the radicalization process, including recruitment, facilitating financing, and in some cases the women are "pulling a Mulan" (in reference to the Chinese legend about Mulan, a woman in a male dominated society who took her father's place in the military) and going to fight. Although some women are supporting extremists, the vast majority are not. Women represent a contested space and important ally for the international community in the fight against violent extremism.