



KAICIID FORUM IN AMMAN TO DEVELOP INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES TO COUNTER EXREMISM ON SOCIAL MEDIA

More than 120 participants from religious communities, civil society and interreligious organizations across the Middle East will meet in Amman from 11 to 14 September 2015 to develop new strategies for using social media to promote dialogue between different worldviews, cultures and religions.

The Arab Social Media Forum, “Social Media as Space for Dialogue,” is an initiative of the Vienna-based International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), with the support of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (RIIFS), Al-Azhar, and the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC).

During the first three days of workshops, the participants will be encouraged to explore different ways that social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can be used to counteract the messages of hate being spread by extremist and terrorist groups.

The KAICIID Director General Fahad Abualnaser, said that this Forum – organized as part of KAICIID’s United against Violence in the Name of Religion (UVNR) initiative – will train dialogue practitioners from the Middle East in the strategic use of social media, as well as develop innovative new approaches in this field.

“Social media has such amazing potential to spread messages of peace and tolerance, but at the moment so much of that potential has to be focused to have a greater effect,” he said.

“We need to encourage creativity by providing the necessary training to dialogue practitioners so they feel comfortable exploring the myriad possibilities that social media offers. And we also need to encourage more young people – who are the greatest social media innovators – to add their voices to the dialogue. This Forum has been designed to target both of these goals.”

On the final day of the meeting, the outcomes of the workshops will be presented during a public panel, which will be attended by religious leaders, social media experts and social media influencers.

The KAICIID Senior Adviser, Professor Mohammed Abu-Nimer said, “Our hope is to take the ideas from the workshops and present a single or multiple social media campaigns on the final day that can be used as templates for promoting dialogue and condemning the use of violence in the name of religion,”

“The participants will also take what they learn to become trainers and advocates for social media within their respective communities and organizations,” he added.

Other outcomes of the Forum will include a “Training of Trainers” programme for youth in the region; a manual on social media and dialogue; and the formation of a network among the participants.

Abu-Nimer explained that the need for such a forum was first highlighted by religious leaders during KAICIID’s high-level conference held in Vienna last November, where the UVNR initiative was launched.

United Against Violence in the Name of Religion (UVNR)

The UVNR initiative was launched at a meeting in Vienna in November, 2014, where leaders of Muslim, Christian, and other religious and ethnic communities from Iraq, Syria and the larger Middle East region jointly issued the Vienna Declaration, which denounced violence in the name of religion.

Since then, the initiative has continued to grow. KAICIID has been implementing various UVNR activities in partnership with organisations such as UNESCO, the UN Office for the Prevention of Genocide and ISESCO, as well as NGOs.

ABOUT KAICIID: The KAICIID Dialogue Centre is the intergovernmental organization that uses dialogue to build peace in conflict areas. The founding states of the Centre are the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Austria and the Kingdom of Spain. The Holy See is the Founding Observer. Prominent representatives from five major world religions make up the nine-member Board of Directors. The Board designs and supervises the Centre’s programs.

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