

**Special meeting of the Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee  
on “Preventing the Exploitation of Information and Communication  
Technologies (ICT) for Terrorist Purposes, while Respecting Human  
Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”**

**United Nations, New York, USA**

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**“International Cooperation and Public-Private Partnership while  
Respecting International Human Rights”**

**A Speech Delivered**

**by:**

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Respected guests,

I am happy to have the opportunity to address you today

For those of you who are not familiar with my distinguished institution, Al-Azhar is over a millenium old educational hub; a prestigious shrine of the moderate teachings of Islam. As an institution, it represents the unified spirit of this religion. It is the highest scholarly authority for Muslims all over the world.

Al-Azhar University –one of the biggest sectors affiliated with Al-Azhar Mosque- comprises 83 faculties and colleges that teach Arabic, Shari’ah and modern sciences including medicine, engineering, pharmacy, Fiqh, Islamic Da'wah, etc. The number of students enrolled in the University in both undergraduate and post graduate studies is about 500.000, among them there are about 40.000 international students from 66 countries.

In our world today as we face terrorism that threatens all humans and differentiates not between one religion and another and as we face fanaticism that is not restricted to one specific religion, it becomes

necessary that we all cooperate with one another to build a strong and supportive front that would form a platform against this danger.

Meanwhile, it is good to reaffirm, as this honorable committee holds this meeting, the crucial role of the exploitation of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) in the spread of the terrorism, not just on the level of communicating their ideas and ideologies, but also, reaching new recruits, planning operations and activities and gathering intelligence. With the emergence of ISIS, it started extensively using Internet for releasing threats via the beheadings videos and barbaric atrocities.

Thus, the communication technologies in general, and the internet, in particular, have recently become main tools for the terrorist groups to spread their ideologies and reach as much as possible audience via a secret means.

We at Al-Azhar Al-Sharif have established Al-Azhar Observer in Foreign Languages to monitor the activities of such groups, particularly ISIS, being the most violent and most active one currently. It has been clear for us how ISIS is exploiting the ICTs to spread its thoughts and especially through the use of social media including youtube, facebook, twitter etc. For instance, according to some studies, about 90% of organized terrorism on the internet takes place via social media.

This should urge the member states and organizations of concern to work together to find ways to confront this spread of terrorism, at least, to protect our new generations while not restricting legal individual freedom. There are different ways to achieve this noble goal, but an important one is partnerships and the practical steps that follow from these forms of cooperation.

## International Cooperation

Being an international threat, it requires joint work between different organizations, bodies and institutions. This is a crucial issue as facing this threat requires our joint work. In every state and in every religion there are moderate entities that pursue achieving peace and eliminating terrorism. My country, Egypt, has the institution widely known to be a Voice of Islamic Moderation i.e. Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, which is the oldest Scholarly Islamic institution. Driven by its religious responsibility and human message, Al-Azhar is currently cooperating with different institutions both regional and international ones, to spread the culture of peace and peaceful co-existence. Among these bodies are King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) based in Vienna, the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies (RIIFS) in Jordan, the Muslim Council of Elders in Emirates which is headed by the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, and the World Council of Churches.

To be short, I would like to briefly shed some light on Al-Azhar cooperation with only two examples here: the Muslim Council of Elders and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The Muslim Council of Elders is an independent international authority, which Promotes Peace in Muslim societies by avoiding conflict and factors of division and encouraging the culture of peaceful coexistence. The Council is Headed by the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. There are different projects run by Al-Azhar and the Council, among which is the Peace Envoys” sent to a number of world countries, in the East and the West. The aim of these Envoys was to spread the culture of peace among Muslims in the hope that such efforts would contribute in protecting those Muslims

from terrorism that shows no respect for the divine obligations of observing mercy and love for the sake of Allah.

Another initiative developed by Al-Azhar in this regard is its cooperation with the WCC to protect the youth of those two faiths against the claims of violence and struggle, promoted by radical thought. To achieve this, Al-Azhar held the First International Forum for the Christian and Muslim Youth in Cairo at the seat of Al-Azhar last August. The forum was attended by 40 young men and women from 15 countries. The aim of the Forum was obviously encouraging constructive dialogue between the youth and hearing the misconceptions they have, directly from them. Also the forum witnessed discussions about global issues such as terrorism, radicalism and peace. In this forum it was made clear that there is no room in religions for relations that are based on conflicts and economic, cultural or military hegemony between nations and people. This is because that our perspective about the issue of social peace at the local and universal levels should be derived first and foremost from a logical fact that has been proved by history and reality, that is, all people will never be united by one religion, dogma, language, ethnicity or color and even fingerprints.

In addition, I cannot forget referring to the enthusiastic attempts of Al-Azhar and the Vatican to resume dialogue after five years of suspended talks. This was a significant message to the terrorist groups that our difference in faith is not a source of struggle and killing, as it is a manifestation of diversity more than difference.

At the end of My talk, I would like to say that such attempts and partnerships between large and moderate organizations should be enhanced and supported on the international legal level especially by the UN and its affiliated committees, for this practical cooperation is the only way to

protect the minds of young men and women against what we call now  
Cyber terrorism.

Thanks for your attentive listening!