Hedayah’s Mission: Countering Violent Extremism

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Objectives:

1. Students will explain the mission of Hedayah, a nongovernmental organization based in the United Arab Emirates.
2. Students will evaluate the effectiveness of measures used for Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).

Lesson Sequence:

1. Introduction/Homework: Have students read the Washington Post article about Hedayah, along with the Fact Sheet published by Hedayah. If computers/iPads are available, students can explore Hedayah’s homepage, Facebook page, or Twitter feed to get a basic idea of the mission of Hedayah.
2. Large group activity: Have the “four corners” signs posted in different corners or sections of the room. Read the four statements to students (or project/write them on the board), and ask students which factor they think MOST draws people to modern extremist movements. Give students think time to process their response. You can also have them write a paragraph in response to one of the statements. Have students get up and move to the posted statement with which they agree the most. Once students have moved to their stations, call on various students to defend their choice. For extra fun, allow students to move from one statement to another if they change their mind, based on the justifications given by their classmates.

Four corner statements:

* Lack of economic opportunity
* Corrupt education systems
* Appeals on social and mass media
* Local political corruption

1. Small group activity: In groups of 3-4, students will use the “rank and defend” strategy to analyze the effectiveness of CVE measures (particularly those used by Hedayah). Students should arrange cards in order from what they believe to be the MOST EFFECTIVE to the LEAST EFFECTIVE in countering violent extremism.
   * Access to quality education
   * Women’s rights and opportunities
   * Economic opportunities
   * Youth access to sports, arts, and cultural programs
   * Training of local authorities and community members to recognize signs of extremism
   * Prison reform with a focus on rehabilitation and de-radicalization
   * Social media campaigns to promote CVE measures
   * Humanizing victims by telling stories of those affected by violent extremism
2. Processing activity: Have students prepare reports to present to the United Nations regarding the most effective measures for countering violent extremism. Students will need access to computers/iPads to research how these measures have been implemented recently. Students should present their proposal of how CVE measures should be prioritized, including justifications of their proposed priorities.

As an alternative, you could also have students choose one of the CVE measures, and create a report to the class about how that strategy has been used recently to counter violent extremism. The report can include the student’s (or group’s) assessment of how effective that strategy is, based on the evidence they found. See “additional readings” for articles that could be used to guide student research.

Resources:

Washington Post story on Hedayah: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/david-ignatius-a-fresh-approach-on-preventing-terrorism/2014/10/21/dcba10de-594e-11e4-b812-38518ae74c67_story.html>

Hedayah Fact Sheet: <http://www.hedayah.ae/pdf/hedayah-factsheet.pdf>

Hedayah home page: <http://www.hedayah.ae>

Hedayah facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/Hedayah.CVE>

Hedayah Twitter feed: <https://twitter.com/Hedayah_CVE>

Additional Readings (for teacher background or student enrichment):

“How to Raise Children Who Choose Peace”

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/molly-alexander-darden/how-to-raise-children-who_b_6632992.html>

The role of social media in promoting or countering extremism

<http://brianpellot.religionnews.com/2015/05/22/countering-violent-extremism-and-hate-speech-in-the-age-of-social-media/>

Report from Brookings Institute about CVE measures and America’s foreign policy role

<http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/articles/2009/9/summer%20fall%20radicalism%20taspinar/summer_fall_radicalism_taspinar.pdf>

The relationship between rap music and extremism <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/08/al-qaedas-new-front-jihadi-rap-110481.html?ml=m_pm#.VXB4vWTBzGe>

Profile of a comedian working to counter extremism

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/husseinkesvani/muslim-youtuber-comedy-extremism>

Profile of a Lebanese pop star that became involved with a jihadist group

<http://www.ibtimes.com/lebanese-pop-star-fadel-shaker-surrender-alleged-jihadist-was-fugitive-2-years-1841810>

<http://www.albawaba.com/entertainment/fadel-shaker-30-has-former-singer-turned-over-yet-another-leaf-666206>

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/06/17/Lebanese-singer-turned-Islamist-says-will-sell-his-home-to-back-FSA.html>