

# International Conference on Studying the Causes of Extremism kicks off

The International Conference on Studying the Causes of Extremism, organised by the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute at Qatar University (SESRI), kicked off in Doha yesterday.

The two-day event gathers international experts, scientists and decision-makers from around the world.

The agenda includes five sessions, which are going to be on the role of evidence-based policy in combating extremism, assessing risk factors for this phenomenon, ways to control and combat it, processes of extremism and flexibility, with new approaches to measuring extremism and intolerance.

The organisers said that the conference is the first-of-its-kind in the Middle East and is part of Qatar's ongoing efforts to strengthen the fight against terrorism in bilateral and multilateral forums.

At the beginning of the conference, Dr Hassan Rashid al-Derham, president, Qatar University, said in a speech that experts will discuss the factors and risks of extremism and the mechanisms to address this phenomenon as well as assessment of the international efforts to monitor and combat radicalism and violent extremism, noting that these scientific events are in line with the continuous efforts exerted by Qatar to promote progress in combating extremism and terrorism in various international forums.

He said that the conference is a platform for launching an important new research project by SESRI in partnership with a

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number of research centres and distinguished policy institutes around the world to develop an international index to measure the level of extremism leading to violence and study its determinants and track them over time and space, with a view to having access to international data on the phenomenon to be available to researchers and policy makers.

Addressing the opening session, Major General Abdul Aziz Abdullah al-Ansari, chairman, National Counter-Terrorism Committee, underscored the importance of this conference and its role in enhancing Qatar's efforts in confronting terrorism. "This indicator will be an essential reference for measuring this phenomenon."

"The phenomenon of extremism is global and requires an



Speakers at the International Conference on Studying the Causes of Extremism in Doha yesterday. PICTURES: Nasar K Moidheen



Dr Hassan Rashid al-Derham, president, Qatar University.

international effort to combat it," he said, adding that Qatar is one of the leading countries in combating the phenomenon of terrorism "and is proud of what it accomplishes at the international level in this field."

He referred to the agreements signed by Qatar with the United Nations and its strategic partnerships to face this dangerous



A section of the audience.

phenomenon around the world.

For her part, Michele Coninx, executive director, Executive Directorate of Counter-Terrorism at the UN Security Council, commended the conference,

which, she said it examines the causes of extremism, stressing the need for a practical and thoughtful approach to combating the phenomenon of terrorism and studying the causes of some

tendency towards this dangerous scourge and the real motives for their involvement in the ranks of terrorists.

She called for genuine partnerships between governments,

research centres and various civil society institutions to put in place effective mechanisms and evidence-based policies and develop sound practices to counter extremism. (QNA)

## NCTC chief underscores Qatar's role in countering extremism

National Counter-Terrorism Committee (NCTC) Chairman Major General Abdul Aziz Abdullah al-Ansari yesterday stressed that Qatar has a leading role in confronting the phenomenon of extremism and terrorism, "as the country is moving forward to strengthen its bilateral, international and multilateral partnerships to address this phenomenon".

In a statement on the sidelines of 'International Conference on Studying the Causes of Extremism', which began in Doha yesterday, Major General al-Ansari said that Qatar has implemented many programmes in the field of combating terrorism and its financing, in addition, it has concluded cooperation agreements in this regard, whether international, bilateral or multilateral.

He stressed that Qatar is an example in this regard.

He pointed out that Qatar signed an agreement with the United Nations to establish a centre in Doha to apply behavioural visions to violent extremism to study the behavioural roots of violent extremism and evidence-based global policies and programs inspired by behaviours to prevent and combat violent extremism leading to terrorism.

During the first session of the conference, Maj Gen al-Ansari presented the experience of Qatar in confronting terrorism and extremism and drying up its sources. He pointed out that the role of NCTC is to develop policies, plans, and programmes to combat terrorism.

He noted the convening of this conference, which will result in the launch of an international index to measure violent extremism in the world to be a global reference for researchers and decision-makers to study the issue of extremism and make sound evidence-based decisions to address this phenomenon. "We believe that executive decision-making must be science-based and supported by scientific research in diverse fields," he said.

NCTC chairman pointed to the role of research centres in analysing reality, studying it and foreseeing the future based on accurate scientific data.

He explained that the phenomenon of terrorism requires a deep knowledge effort because of its seriousness in threatening international peace and security. He stressed the need for detailed studies of each community so that the response efforts are deliberate and not just sterile reactions.

He stressed the need to build a close relationship between decision-makers



NCTC Chairman Major General Abdul Aziz Abdullah al-Ansari speaking at the conference.

ers, institutions and research centres so that the policies adopted to confront the phenomenon of violent extremism are based on evidence to ensure its success and effectiveness in the face of this phenomenon.

Al-Ansari pointed to emerging areas of interest to the international community today, which require the efforts from research centres to study and analyse the contents of the extremism and terrorism, such as some electronic games, social media and cartoons dedicated to children, and modern devices that provide a wide choice for its users, which could become an outlet for extremists and terrorist recruiters.

He stressed the importance of having serious and objective studies to guide the religious discourse with fruitful moderation. He pointed to not turn efforts to combat religion itself, which causes the creation of new extremist groups we need to use thematic studies for the benefit of religious institutions to make the religious discourse keep up with the times and developments.

With regard to educational curricula, media and civil society institutions as important axes and areas to counter extremism, al-Ansari called on scientific research institutions to take the lead in supporting decision-making centres by studying these areas with interest, and clarifying what may be

overlooked by the decision-maker, especially in relation to sensitive phenomena that the committee specialises in combating their causes and consequences.

Michele Coninx, executive director, Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), said that research centres and related institutions should study the motives of extremism in some people, and study these cases in-depth, to reach results that will help to take preventive action in this regard. "There is certainly no single cause for extremism, therefore there are no single measures to counter it, as the motives are different, so the actions must be different."

During the session entitled "The role of evidence-based policy in countering extremism", Coninx stressed the importance of knowledge-based procedures, pointing to the role of research centres in this area.

She pointed to the importance of using sound scientific research to identify policies to counter-terrorism.

Douglas Andrew Smith, former assistant secretary for the private sector at the US Department of Homeland Security, stressed the importance of adopting scientific mechanisms to understand the current situation and derive results. He said that this field is open for academics to contribute to the diagnosis and analysis of the phenomenon of extremism.

Andrew Glazzard, senior director of the National Security Studies Research Group at Royal United Services Institute, called for the inclusion of countering extremism in the general policy of any country in the world, stressing the importance of the results of research and studies on extremism available to the decision-maker.

He pointed to the role of the various humanities in studying and diagnosing extremism and analysing its motives and risks, based on the fact that the motives of extremism are not the same but are intertwined with many psychological, behavioural, social, economic, cultural, religious and other factors.

Two other sessions were held during the first day of the conference, one of which was entitled "assessing risk factors of extremism". The other discussed a topic titled "extremism and resilience". They focused on many aspects in which research centres play an important role in supporting decision-makers to take informed policies to address serious phenomena, especially those that threaten community peace. (QNA)

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