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Confronting Terrorism: The Epidemic of Our Times

We are reeling from today's horrific terrorist attacks - in Tunisia, France and Kuwait.

At least 37 people vacationing at a Sousse beachside hotel in Tunisia were killed by gunmen, as guests scrambled in fear to hide. In France, at least one assailant triggered an explosion by ramming his car into gas tanks; later, a man's decapitated body was found, desecrated by inflammatory Arabic writing. Then, during traditional Muslim Friday prayers, a suicide bomber killed more than ten Muslim people at a Shi'ite mosque in Kuwait City.

Whether coordinated or not, several and maybe all of these acts appear to claim the mantle of Islam. Even as we loudly condemn the slaughter and the destabilizing fear they instill, we must remain clear. These terrorist acts represent a growing epidemic of terrorism - conducted by individuals from a multitude of different groups, philosophies and beliefs.

Terrorism is the work of a slim minority of extremists. They include some who claim to follow Islam. But they also include people from other traditions. Like Ashin Wirathu, a Burmese Buddhist monk leading attacks against the Rohingya Muslim people. Or, in the U.S., Dylan Storm Roof, who slaughtered nine Christians in Charleston, South Carolina last week in the name of white supremacy. And Wade Michael Page, who killed women and men from the Sikh community in Oak Creek, Wisconsin out of pure hatred.

All these are acts of terrorism. Today, we stand unified in condemning the horror in Kuwait, France and Tunisia. Just as last week, we condemned the horror inflicted in Charleston.

By naming terrorism wherever it occurs, we take a powerful step forward in confronting and combating the epidemic of our times.

We are thinking of the victims and their families,

Joyce S. Dubensky
Chief Executive Officer