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As Boko Haram rises, Nigerian *Peacemakers* Respond

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Tanenbaum CEO, Joyce Dubensky and Tanenbaum Peacemakers, Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye of Nigeria are available to speak with the press.

Following the tranquility of evening prayers, the sounds of screaming children pierced Nigeria's Dalori village as children were burnt alive. Boko Haram had arrived and three female suicide bombers detonated their vests, killing villagers who tried to stop their attack.

At Tanenbaum, we have witnessed the rise of Boko Haram through the eyes of our Nigerian *Peacemakers in Action*, Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye. (Once mortal enemies, they now work together to teach warring religious youth and others to peacefully resolve conflicts.) Although ISIS dominates international headlines, Boko Haram is the world's deadliest terrorist group – according to the 2015 Global Terrorism Index Report. In 2014, ISIS slaughtered 6,073 people, while Boko Haram was responsible for 6,644 terrorist deaths.ⁱ

“Boko Haram is devastating Nigeria,” noted Tanenbaum CEO Joyce Dubensky. “As thousands of families are torn apart by kidnappings, murder and fractured communities, children are being burned alive. But the victims of this local massacre are not the only ones affected. The global Muslim community, Christians and humanity at large is also suffering from these attacks.”

Peacemakers Imam Ashafa and Pastor Wuye of the Interfaith Mediation Centre in Nigeria, agree. Imam Ashafa notes how the media's focus is on the atrocities committed by terrorist groups that claim the mantle of Islam. He worries that this overlooks the majority of Muslims who live peacefully and take action against terrorism. “The Muslim community is also a victim. We would never make attention-worthy headlines because the media wants to broadcast how much blood has been shed and how many have died, not how many were saved and how many fight against ISIS and Boko Haram.”ⁱⁱ

“Self-proclaimed Muslim terrorists capture the headlines, and many people incorrectly presume that terrorism and Islam are synonymous. And that leads to stereotypes, hate and alienation. This is a cycle we have to stop,” says Dubensky. “One way we can do this is through education. By sharing practical information, for example among teachers and community members, we can reduce hatred and make sure our communities become informed by facts instead of fear.”

Tanenbaum offers a range of educational curricula and other materials including its [Combating Extremism](#) resources, which help teachers and individuals address extremism constructively in classrooms and communities.

Tanenbaum is a secular, non-sectarian nonprofit that systematically dismantles religious violence and hatred through Peacemakers in armed conflicts and by tackling religious bullying of students, harassment in workplaces and disparate health treatment for people based on their beliefs. Supported by Tanenbaum, faith-driven peace activists from around the world reduce violence and build cultures that reject extremism. As a result of Tanenbaum and its peacebuilders, peace interventions have taken place in Syria, Sri Lanka, Nigeria and other stressed regions. Tanenbaum’s work also combats daily religious prejudice and hate in schools, workplaces and health care.

ⁱ The Institute for Economics and Peace. 2015 Global Terrorism Index Report. Publication. Accessed February 1, 2016. [http://static.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/2015 Global Terrorism Index Report.pdf](http://static.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/2015%20Global%20Terrorism%20Index%20Report.pdf).

ⁱⁱ "[Nigeria's Imam and the Pastor Talk Interfaith Conflict Issues](#)." University of Massachusetts Boston. December 9, 2015. Accessed February 01, 2016.