

## *PEACEMAKER IN ACTION* HIND KABAWAT

### TESTIMONY AT U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARING ON THE ISLAMIC STATE AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Tanenbaum *Peacemaker in Action* Hind Kabawat recently recalled for the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs a time – not so long ago – when her children were growing up and playing with their Muslim and Christian friends.

**“They learned that Syria was a place of harmony for people of different religions to live peacefully, to coexist, and to set an example for communities worldwide.”<sup>i</sup>**

Now, however, Syria, is rife with violence under Bashar Al Assad’s leadership and increasingly falling under ISIS’s control. Both Assad and ISIS are targeting religious minorities including Catholic, Orthodox and Armenian while simultaneously devastating the Muslim majority.

#### **How can the international community protect religious minorities and all the people in Syria?**

Kabawat, Director of Interfaith Peacebuilding at the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University, presented strategies for the way forward to the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs in May 2015. One of those strategies involved establishing **safe havens** in communities where multiple religions live side by side.

“Key to the maintenance and success of safe havens is the **policy of inclusion**. Our goal should be **to guarantee the best safety possible for the greatest number of Syrians possible**, bringing together men and women from all ethnic and religious groups who can easily and quickly gain access to the safe haven area.

Singling out a specific ethnic or religious group to protect more earnestly than others would be damaging to Syria’s security in the long term and preclude **a return to the coexistence** that has been a hallmark of Syria’s long history.”<sup>ii</sup>

Not only are the country’s people under siege, but so is Syria’s culture as ISIS destroys its historic monuments.

“Because these sites harken back to a flourishing and pluralistic past that legitimizes the histories of religious minorities, such sites are seen as a threat to ISIS and are summarily destroyed. The group believes that it cannot control the future until it controls the past.”<sup>iii</sup>

ISIS claims the mantle of Islam, but as Kabawat testified, its claim is false:

**“The threat of ISIS has endangered Muslims and Christians alike, all of whom have been victim to its brutal treatment of those who do not follow its cruel and deeply flawed interpretation of Islam.”<sup>iv</sup>**

Another strategy Kabawat utilizes in her work includes targeted trainings for Syrians of all backgrounds. The trainings have involved fellow Tanenbaum *Peacemakers in Action*. Kabawat invited *Peacemakers in Action* Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge of South Africa and Friar Ivo Markovic of Bosnia-Herzegovia to train Syrian peace activists in nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution, negotiation tactics and transitional justice.

Read Kabawat’s [proposal](#) about how the U.S. can help reverse ISIS’s gains and end Assad’s [rampage](#). View her complete testimony to the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs [here](#).

Read Tanenbaum’s **[Syria Intervention report](#)** detailing Kabawat’s conflict resolution trainings in Jordan and Turkey with fellow *Peacemakers in Action*.

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<sup>i</sup> Hind Kabawat, “Ancient Communities Under Attack: ISIS’s War on Religious Minorities” U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs, (2015).

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.