



Youth Empowerment and Violent Extremism

Dr. Malisa Neptune-Figaro

Context

- **Thirty-nine (39) Interviewees**
 - Three (3) returnees
 - Eighteen(18) family/friends
 - Seven (7) acquaintances
 - Eleven (11) Islamic community members
- **FBI documents**
- **Agencies/Advocates** - Venezuelan Red Cross and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
- **Academic Researchers**

Although Trinidad and Tobago was not recorded as having the most Muslims in the western hemisphere per capita, the country has been reported as having the highest number of persons per capita joining ISIS in the Western Hemisphere.

Why was ISIS successful in recruiting such a relatively high number of Trinidad and Tobago nationals?

Why was the youth population vulnerable to ISIS recruitment?

Motivations for Joining Violent Extremist Groups

Aggressive Recruitment

Religious Rhetoric

Escaping
Legal Matters

Socio-economic
Opportunities

Marginalization

Youth Vulnerabilities and Violent Extremism

Socio-economic
Challenges

Marginalisation

Racial/Ethnic
Biases

Psychological
and Mental
Turmoil

The Way Forward

- Acknowledging that in historical and contemporary Trinidad and Tobago, the system failed young persons, through
 1. the lack of opportunities and resources to succeed
 2. discrimination and labelling
 3. the lack of psychological and mental health services offered
- Continuous youth engagement in mainstream society to prevent radical and extremist views.
- Create more platforms for which youth are educated about mainstream expectations



Conclusion

As credible voices, as role models or as local leaders, youth can contribute to reducing extremism in some communities. For these changes to happen, youth must be part of all stages of such strategies: from their design, to their implementation and, fundamentally, their evaluation.

Thank You !

Dr. Malisa Neptune-Figaro, Bsc. Msc, Ph.D.
Criminologist/Lecturer in Criminology and Criminal Justice
Department of Behavioural Sciences
The University of the West Indies, St Augustine
Room 5 Carmody Road
Email: Malisa.Neptune-Figaro@sta.uwi.edu
Tel: 1(868) 662-2002 EXT 85276