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Lessons Learned from the Deradicalization of Mahmood Mugisha

Abstract

The Mahmood Mugisha story is a story of hope and of the deradicalization success within Eastern Africa. Individuals join violent extremist or terrorist organizations, in this case al-Shabaab, for many reasons. Although other countries developed or are in the process of developing their own deradicalization programmes – most notably in Kenya and Somalia – the story of Mugisha was not part of a structured deradicalization process. Its success was based on the humane treatment on the part of criminal justice actors, in particular counterterrorism police officers, the prosecution authority, and prisons. It is a story where respect for human rights, rule of law and simple humanity led to a cognitive opening those involved in the radicalization process did not prepare for.

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BACKGROUND

With the financial support from the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, since 2020 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been implementing a project on supporting the Eastern African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO) and its regional Counter-Terrorism Centre of Excellence (CTCoE). The project benefits fourteen EAPCCO members¹ while supporting the EAPCCO CTCoE and assisting EAPCCO members in enhancing national and regional capacities to effectively prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism, and related serious crime.

One of the objectives of the project is to produce evidence-based research and knowledge products, relevant for the law enforcement and criminal justice practitioners in Eastern Africa. The CTCoE

developed this paper with the support from UNODC as part of this objective.

The CTCoE has published issue papers on cooperation between law enforcement and prison authorities,² terrorism financing,³ engagement with victims of terrorism,⁴ on links between transnational organized crime and terrorism,⁵ links between terrorism and human trafficking and migrant smuggling in Eastern Africa,⁶ and on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on al-Shabaab's modus operandi.⁷ Upcoming issue papers include practical border security guidelines, and overview of prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies in the region, a study of the linkages between terrorist and armed groups in the DRC, Tanzania and Mozambique, and an examination of the prevalence of the improvised explosive devices.

FOREWORD

As the rest of the world watched the FIFA World Cup final being played between Spain and the Netherlands, Uganda experienced one of the worst terrorist attacks in its history. Coordinated attacks, involving two suicide bombers detonated their devices at approximately 22:25 at Ethiopian Village

Restaurant and 23:15 at Kyadondo Rugby Club. In the first attack at the Ethiopian Village, situated in the Kabalagala neighborhood, fifteen people were killed. The second attack, which consisted of two explosions at the Kyadondo Rugby Club in Nakawa, resulted in the death of 49 people. Initially, 64

- 1 The EAPCCO members are Burundi, Comoros, the DRC, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.
- 2 EAPCCO CTCoE Issue Paper 1/2021 Cooperation between law enforcement and prison authorities in counterterrorism cases: unravelling expectations and proposals to strengthen cooperation: https://eapcco-ctcoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/UNODC_CTCoE_Issue_Paper.pdf
- 3 EAPCCO CTCoE Issue Paper 2/2021 Countering the financing of terrorism in Eastern Africa: https://eapcco-ctcoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/UNODC_CTCoE_Issue_Paper_2_2021.pdf
- 4 EAPCCO CTCoE Issue Paper 3/2021 Law Enforcement Engagement with Victims of Terrorism: https://eapcco-ctcoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/UNODC_CTCoE_Issue_Paper_3_2021.pdf
- 5 EAPCCO CTCoE Issue Paper 1/2022 Addressing the Links between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism in Eastern Africa: https://eapcco-ctcoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/UNODC_CTCoE_Issue_Paper_3_2021.pdf
- 6 EAPCCO CTCoE Issue Paper 2/2022 Addressing the Links between Human Trafficking, Migrant Smuggling and Terrorism in Eastern Africa: <https://eapcco-ctcoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/EAPCCO-CTCoE-Issue-Paper-2-2022.pdf>
- 7 EAPCCO CTCoE Issue Paper 3/2022 The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on al-Shabaab Modus Operandi and the Law Enforcement Response in Kenya and Somalia: <https://eapcco-ctcoe.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/EAPCCO-CTCoE-Issue-Paper-3-2022.pdf>

people (rising to 77) died and an additional 57 were admitted at various hospitals due to their injuries.

Whilst most of the casualties were Ugandan nationals, six Eritreans, one Ethiopian, Indian, Irish, and American national were amongst the fatalities.⁸ One day after the attacks, an unexploded vest, as well as a mobile phone (used to remotely detonate explosives), were found in a Makindye discotheque. Crucial evidence found in this unexploded device, most notably the mobile phone provided an important breakthrough in the case.

Of those directly involved in the attacks only Hassan Luyima, Idris Nsubuga and Muzafar Luyima were recruited, trained, and instructed while in Uganda, while others were in Somalia as foreign fighters. As a central figure in the planning of the attacks and especially after, Mahmood Mugisha decided to confess and turn state witness, questions started to emerge whether the case of Mugisha can be classified as a success story in the deradicalization of a highly dedicated member of al-Shabaab (listed in the United Nations Security Council Consolidated List; SOe.001). This amid allegations (later to be confirmed by Mugisha) that he was supposed to be the third suicide bomber in the attacks and completely committed to the successful execution of the attacks at the time of his first arrest in April 2010 (three months before the attacks). If true, what

facilitated this radical change in conviction in the ideals and strategy of al-Shabaab, at the time Issa Luyima stayed on 'course' to become one of five accused to receive life-long sentences.

The author has met Mugisha for the first time on 1 August 2013 at Kigo prison outside Kampala and stayed in contact since, especially after his release from prison. The following analysis is the result of several in-person and virtual interviews with Mugisha into how and why he got involved in al-Shabaab, but more importantly how and why he disengaged from the organization.

Several studies were conducted, and theories developed on how and why radicalization occurs. And while overlap exists, one factor that practitioners and scholars increasingly agree upon is that although similarities exist, people are unique, and one person's process is not necessarily that of another. The objective of this paper is therefore to focus on Mugisha's story. The first part of this analysis will briefly introduce radicalization, disengagement (including the most cited reasons for disengaging) and deradicalization before introducing Mugisha and the Kampala attacks in Uganda in 2010 that led up to Mugisha's arrest and conviction. The final part voice Mugisha's suggestions on how violent extremist offenders should be treated, reworked into recommendations.

EXPLORING THE BASIC CONCEPTS

Generally, radicalization is associated with a process through which a person adopts an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to affect societal change.⁹

Tore Bjørgo in 2004¹⁰ identified the following four levels or causes of radicalization:

- 1. Structural causes that affect people's lives, i.e., external circumstances in which an individual finds themselves.**
- 2. Facilitator causes that make joining a violent extremist organization possible and/or attractive.**

8 Phillipa Croome, Eritreans lost six of their own but the soldier on, *Daily Monitor*, 11 July 2011, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/SpecialReports/-/688342/1198672/-/uvsro9/-/index.html> (accessed on 15 August 2011).

9 Rabasa, Angel, Stacie L. Pettyjohn, Jeremy J. Ghez, and Christopher Boucek. "Disengagement and Deradicalization." In *Deradicalizing Islamist Extremists*, 1-32. RAND Corporation, 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg1053srf.9>.

10 Bjørgo, Tore. *Root causes of terrorism: Myths, reality and ways forward*. Routledge, 2004.

3. **Motivational causes that include actual personal experiences or grievances motivating a person to want to act.**
4. **Triggering causes that refer to events that served as the final catalyst.**

In most cases, people that were radicalized refer to a particularly emotional event that finally ‘provoked’ them to respond to the actions of the perceived enemy

Building on the above, John Horgan (2008) made a distinction between push- and pull factors:

Push-factors include:¹¹

1. **An emotional vulnerability includes emotions such as anger and alienation.**
2. **The perceived failure of all non-violent measures, including political participation or peaceful protest to rectify a particular wrong.**
3. **Identifying with the victims of political repression, religious persecution, cultural discrimination, economic deprivation, etc.**

Pull-factors include:

1. **Rewards the person might enjoy for joining the organization in the form of, for example, personal material rewards, a sense of belonging, etc.**
2. **Social attachment to friends and family members who are already radicalized.**

On the other side of the spectrum, disengagement can broadly be described as the ‘process of changing one’s behavior by refraining from violence and withdrawing from a radical organization.’¹² This being said, disengagement should not be seen as automatic deradicalization. Instead, it can be the first step in the deradicalization process.

Disengaging from the organization’s activities can be caused by several factors that are not necessarily the result of the individual’s own decision. For

example, being arrested will also serve as a reason for disengagement. In other words, disengagement is associated with a behavioral change. In the above example where an individual was arrested, disengagement is involuntary. In contrast, voluntary disengagement occurs after the person calculated the costs and benefits of being an active member of an extremist organization and decides that leaving the organization outweighs the benefit of being a member.

The degree of disengagement can also vary while being part of the organization. For example, in selective engagement, the individual might distinguish between ‘legitimate targets’, such as military personnel, and ‘illegitimate targets’, such as civilians and targets only the former. Examples of this form of disengagement occur in cases where traditional domestic groups pledge allegiance to international terrorist organizations, such as al-Qaida and the modus operandi starts to include suicide attacks that result in a drastic increase in civilian casualties.

In one of the best examples, after the Salafist Group for Combat and Preaching (Le Groupe Salafiste pour La Prédication et le Combat or GSPC) changed its name to the Organization of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (listed in the United Nations Security Council Consolidated List; QDe.014) the group introduced suicide attacks. Following the attacks on 11 April 2007 that resulted in the death of 33 people, leading members in the organization such as Saifi Ammari, alias Abu El Para (listed; QDi.152), surrendered in protest of the killing of civilians. He and others were offered amnesty from prosecution. During this process, he made the following statement: ‘several muftis inside our organization are against using suicide bombings because they hit civilians.’¹³

A few conditions need to exist to facilitate the process of voluntary disengagement. Understandably, a person will be confronted with the question of what to expect when they leave the organization. Applying the rational choice theory, leaving should outweigh the benefits of staying. Understanding the dynamics within the violent extremist/terrorist group, it is especially here where the government

11 Horgan, John. “From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618, no. 1 (2008): 80–94

12 Horgan, John. “From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618, no. 1 (2008): 80–94

13 Botha, Anneli. “Terrorism in the Maghreb: The transnationalisation of domestic terrorism.” *Institute for Security Studies Monographs* 2008, no. 144 (2008): 80.

can play an active role in capitalizing on the weaknesses within the organization where a member starts to contemplate whether leaving the organization outweighs the benefit of staying.

During the period between 2016 and 2018, 133 interviews with former members of al-Shabaab in Somalia were conducted to get a better understanding of why and how respondents initially joined al-Shabaab, but also what influenced them to disengage from the organization.¹⁴ The five main reasons why former members disengaged were in order of priority:

1. The organization turned against me. Within al-Shabaab, the best example was when Ahmed Abdi Aw-Mohamed alias 'Godane', alias Abu Zubeyr (listed; SOi.004) used the Amniyat (intelligence wing) to run assassination hit squads to kill critics, known as the 'purge'. Amongst the victims were Omar Hammami alias al-Amriki (listed; SOi.010) from the US, and Ibrahim Haji Jama Mead alias al-Afghani (who previously fought in Afghanistan – both against the Soviet Union and the US – and Kashmir). Al-Afghani was one of the original founders of al-Shabaab and a member of its Shura Council. Between 2011 and 2013 friction between Godane and disgruntled al-Shabaab members manifested in a letter to Ayman al-Zawahiri (listed, QDi.006), the head of al-Qaida, accusing Godane of being autocratic. Furthermore, Afghani, Mukhtar Robow and Hassan Dahir Aweys (listed; QDi.042) even issued a fatwa against Godane against the killing of foreign jihadists. The latter two leaders later defected after the assassination of Afghani.¹⁵ In addition to this very prominent period in al-Shabaab's history, the perception of the organization turning against an individual member is real. Because of the secretive nature of a violent extremist organization the potential for distrust is a constant reality, especially the fear that the organization and/or cell was infiltrated by a government informant (national as well as foreign security agencies). Still, the reasons why an individual joined are different, and may

also manifest in different levels of commitment. It is these subtle changes that may be interpreted as desertion or concern regarding the level of commitment that adds to stress and doubt.

2. I no longer agree with the tactics of the organization. The example presented above on AQIM, and the disengagement of Abu El Para reflects this reality. Like people, organizations are also in constant flux and as a result of new allegiances and changes in leadership, tactics do change. Again, referring to Algeria, this time the split away from the GSPC from the Armed Islamic Group (Groupe Islamique Armée or GIA; listed; QDe.006), Hassan Hattab, alias Abu Hamza, the head of the GIA network in Europe, established the GSPC in 1998. According to the testimony of Mohamed Berrached, a former GSPC member, Osama bin Laden encouraged Hattab to break away from the GIA in an attempt to portray a better image through its tactics and target selection since al-Qaida withdrew its support for the GIA in 1996 due to the massacres of civilians.¹⁶ Bin Laden is said to have been against the tactics of Ahmad Fadhil Nazzal al-Khalaylah or better known as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. It is well-known that the two leaders had a difficult relationship from the first meeting on due to clashing personalities and views. Al-Zarqawi finally pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden in October 2004, after resisting for nearly five years, to become Emir of al-Qaida in Iraq (QDe.115). In less than a year in July 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri criticized al-Zarqawi for his hostage beheadings, the mass slaughter of Shiites, and that his assaults on their mosques were all having a negative effect on Muslim opinion—both of Bin Laden and, by extension, of al-Qaida—around the world. According to Weaver, "Al-Zawahiri allegedly advised al-Zarqawi that a captive can be killed as easily by a bullet as by a knife."¹⁷

3. Lost trust in the leadership of the organization. Levels of expectations from a leader go hand-

¹⁴ Anneli Botha. Journey to al-Shabaab in Somalia. Unpublished manuscript. 2018.

¹⁵ Nathaniel Horadam, Breuk Bass and Jared Sorhaindo. Profile: Ibrahim Haji Jama Mead (Ibrahim al Afghani). Critical Threats. <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/profile-ibrahim-haji-jama-mead-ibrahim-al-afghani> (accessed on 10 February 2014).

¹⁶ Anneli Botha. Terrorism in the Maghreb: The transnationalisation of domestic terrorism. Institute for Security Studies Monographs 2008, no. 144 (2008): 39.

¹⁷ Mary Ann Weaver. The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The Atlantic, July/August 2006. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/>

in-hand with levels of trust and credibility, and they change over time. Trust goes in three directions: firstly, the team needs to trust the leader, secondly, the leader must trust the team, and thirdly, team members must trust each other.¹⁸ Reflecting on the team trusting the leader and considering the decentralized nature of violent extremism and terrorist organizations, trust in leadership refers to both the overall leadership (for example, the Shura Council) as well as the immediate leader (for example, the cell leader). Like in any company, trust may be limited in top management, while rating higher in respect to the immediate line manager, or vice versa. The ideal is to establish and maintain trust, morale, productivity throughout. Leadership styles, while closely related to personality, are also influenced by prior experience and expertise, cognitive skills, etc. Within terrorist organizations, leadership changes often occur following the death or capture of the former leader and although the successor knows the organization and its members, there is always a transformational period that can be challenging. In other words, although other members may know of the new leader and even his credibility, his position both strategic and tactical may differ from his predecessor. Secondly, not all members in the organization may express the same level of trust and credibility in the new leader which may lead to leadership challenges and factions within the organization.

- 4. I no longer agree with the ideology of the organization.** Individuals join organizations for different reasons. Yet, despite these differences, there are always expectations that may be exaggerated as positive. Unfortunately, it also means that potential members may develop an inability to see the bigger 'picture' or be open to conflicting information. This is often a result of cognitive bias – that every person experiences in one way or another – and occurs when a person processes and interprets information that influences beliefs and affects the decisions and judgments being made. After making the decision to join the organization, the risk that the organization

may not be able to meet expectations is real. Disillusionment may occur over a period and in the case of a terrorist organization due to any of the above reasons and more. Central is the disappointment in reality not meeting expectations, changing values, etc. all leading to growing frustrations. When illusions are shattered, trust is broken, a toxic environment is created, and members usually leave the organization. Returning disillusioned members may have disengaged but they are not necessarily deradicalized.

- 5. Risk of being killed or captured by security forces.** Analyzing disengagement from the standpoint of the theory of compliance, associated with the rational choice theory, individuals are offered a reward, for example amnesty. Individuals are presented with an exit strategy, influencing an individual to willingly disengage by the fear of being killed due to counterterrorist measures or because government may offer financial and/or other incentives. Although the individual may disengage from the organization, they may potentially still return to the organization when circumstances or conditions change. To prevent this from occurring authorities offer deradicalization programs “to prevent or change an individual’s ideological convictions, attitudes or ways of thinking which motivate and/or justify extremist offending. These usually counter specific interpretations, positions, or arguments (based on political doctrine, scripture, or mythology) that inform beliefs and attitudes legitimizing extremist violence. Changing these convictions, attitudes or ways of thinking is intended to promote desistance.”¹⁹

In addition, analyzing the reasons for disengaging, respondents were also asked to identify the party they would listen to when convincing them to surrender of which most respondents identified elders and family members. Focusing on the role of government influencing members to surrender, rank-and-file members were more inclined to be convinced than individuals part of the 'leaders' sample. Understandably, the 'leaders' sample was part of the organization for a longer period and

18 Shelley Smith. Lack of Trust Can Make Workplaces Sick and Dysfunctional. Forbes, 24 October 2019. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2019/10/24/lack-of-trust-can-make-workplaces-sick-and-dysfunctional/?sh=11f0984d44d1>

19 Shelley Smith. Lack of Trust Can Make Workplaces Sick and Dysfunctional. Forbes, 24 October 2019. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2019/10/24/lack-of-trust-can-make-workplaces-sick-and-dysfunctional/?sh=11f0984d44d1>

have more to lose than rank-and-file members during which they may be implicated in more severe atrocities. It is especially for this reason that trusted intermediaries – elders or community leaders and family members – have an important role to play to facilitate individuals to surrender.

Deradicalization on the other hand requires a cognitive change that involves a re-orientation of a person’s beliefs, ideology, and objectives. In other words, to achieve successful deradicalization the ultimate objective will be to not only ‘disengage’ but to alter both the person’s attitude towards his/her former ‘enemy’, and behavior as to what will be the most feasible means of expressing him/herself.

Since terrorism is a tactic driven by political and/or ideological reasons it is often categorized as a violent form of ‘communication’. It will be important to reintroduce the person to more peaceful forms of political expression.

At the same time, this should not be a form of re-indoctrination in support of the government of the day, but rather building trust between the institutions and the individual in question.

As with radicalization into violent extremism, deradicalization is equally a process (see Figure 1) involving a few ‘steps’ that will be different for each person. While the above serves as a broad introduction to voluntary disengagement and deradicalization, the rest of this paper will concentrate on the radicalization, disengagement and deradicalization of Mahmood Mugisha.

Figure 1:
Summary of disengagement and deradicalization process



BACKGROUND TO THE KAMPALA ATTACKS AND INVESTIGATION

Saleh Ali Nabhan planned the Kampala attacks till his death on 14 September 2009 for Abdukadir Mohamed Abdukadir alias Ikrima to take over.

Explaining the position of Mugisha at the time, it is important to briefly clarify the position of Nabhan. Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan (prior to the US Embassy attacks Saleh Ali Nabhan facilitated direct communication with Osama bin Laden) married Fatma Ahmed Talo from Lamu.²⁰ Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan and Issa Osman Issa were later implicated in the November 2002 suicide attack at the Paradise Hotel in Kikambala, Mombasa, killing 15 people and injuring 40, and the attempted surface-to-air missile attack on an Israeli passenger airplane in Mombasa. In this attack Saleh Ali Nabhan was the ringleader of the cell in Mombasa under the supervision of Fazul Abdullah Mohammed.²¹ In addition to facilitating communications with Osama bin Laden, Nabhan later served as the chief military strategist for al-Shabaab.²² In other words, the actual links between al-Shabaab, al-Qaida core and the al-Qaida cell in East Africa was facilitated by a small group of individuals, most notably Nabhan and Abu Talha al Sudani (also known as Tariq Abdullah, was al-Qaida's ideological and strategic leader in East Africa and implicated in the 1998 bombings).²³ Further, Nabhan played a central role in securing the link between Sheikh Robow (the former Deputy Commander of the Islamic Courts Union, the deputy leader of al-Shabaab and its former spokesperson) and the al-Qaida cell in East Africa.

Like Nabhan, Abdukadir Mohamed Abdukadir alias Ikrima was a Kenyan national. He was best described

as a strategic planner who was never seen on the frontline. Ikrima was initially a member of the Kenyan-based al-Hijra group (Muslim Youth Centre) that has close relations with al-Shabaab. In addition to be a strategist, he was also a senior recruiter of foreign fighters, serving as a link between al-Shabaab in Somalia and al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, based in Yemen.²⁴

According to Mugisha, Nabhan's initial plan was to make use of suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (SVBIED). After Nabhan was killed, Ikrima instructed Issa Luyima to look for new targets that will fit his strategy in using body-borne improvised explosive devices (BBIED) or suicide vests. Issa was selected to lead the execution cell since he is a Ugandan national that in contrast to a foreign national would attract less attention.

The Uganda execution cell that was directly responsible for the attack included: firstly, Issa Ahmed Luyima, alias Abu Zargawi, the leader confessed that the suicide vests came from Somalia. He was the direct contact with al-Shabaab through fighting earlier for al-Shabaab in Somalia. He previously studied at Brilliant and Kawempe High School in Kawempe before working at Kampala International University. In a press conference, Issa Ahmed Luyima admitted that he recruited his brother (Haruna Hassan Luyima) as well as the Somali and Kenyan bombers and that he examined both targets: "I did not want to work with my brother but recruiting other people was very risky, so I manipulated him."²⁵ Luyima passed through Kenya to enter Uganda and delivered the suicide vests which he received from Nyamandono to his

20 Awadh Babo, Small Village with a Reputation for Terrorism, *All Africa*, 8 March 2004, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200403080455.html> (accessed on 15 April 2004).

21 *Global Jihad*, Profile: Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, 18 October 2007, http://www.globaljihad.net/view_page.asp?id=497 (accessed on 13 December 2008).

22 Nick Grace, Shabaab Leader Sanctioned as Zawahiri Responds to Group's Oath of Loyalty, *The Long War Journal*, 21 November 2008, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/11/shabaab_leader_sanct.php (accessed on 15 December 2008).

23 Bill Roggio, Senior al-Qaeda operative killed in Somalia, *The Long War Journal*, 1 September 2008, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/09/senior_al_qaeda_oper_1.php (accessed on 5 September 2008).

24 BBC News. Profile: Al-Shabab's 'Ikrima'. 25 October 2013. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24442793> (accessed on 27 October 2013).

25 *Global Jihad*, Kampala Blasts 4 Main Suspects.

brothers and returned to Kenya before the attacks were executed.²⁶ According to investigations Hassan Luyima, Issa Luyima and Idrissa Nsubuga visited the three intended targets on 9 July to assess security. Issa arrived back in Nairobi on the morning of 11 July and met with Jabir who was with Mohammed Ali Issa before he left for Mombasa.²⁷

Secondly, Haruna Hassan Luyima, a businessman based at Majestic Plaza in Kampala admitted that he took the Kenyan suicide bomber to Kabalagala and an explosive device to Makindye House in Kampala. According to him Issa Luyima and Idrissa Nsubuga met him on 10 July and took him to Issa's home in Namasuba where he met the Somali and a Kenyan suicide bomber. Issa also gave him the explosive device in a bag he was supposed to take to Makindye House. On 11 July, Haruna, along with the Kenyan suicide bomber, went to Kabalagala. He dropped the suicide bomber and proceeded to the Ethiopian Village Restaurant.²⁸

Thirdly, Idrissa Nsubuga, a businessman at Pioneer Mall in Kampala and a former commerce student at Makerere University was identified as the third suspect directly involved in the attack. Nsubuga confessed that he took the Somali suicide bomber to Lugogo and detonated the second device, before the suicide bomber detonated his device: "On 11 July, we took a boda-boda (motorcycle taxis used in East Africa) to Lugogo. I put a laptop bag that contained one of the bombs on a stool under a table. When a scuffle ensued over a phone, we used the opportunity to get in. Before the Somali joined other travelers, he showed me his clock, which had the time 23:15 when the bombs were to go off. I got out and later, a blast went off. I used the phone I had to set off the second bomb." Asked why he did it, he said: "I was unemployed. I was emotionally distressed. I had problems, a lot of misunderstandings with my wife."²⁹ In an interview with the author, he however indicated that he was never married.

Above four suspects (including Mugisha) were arrested within days after the attacks. In addition to the good police investigation, two additional factors contributed to the suspects' speedy apprehension: shock and disbelief on the part of the attackers

regarding the magnitude and consequences of the attacks. The attacks struck close to home, for even the attackers, as Idrissa Nsubuga's aunt Margaret Nabankema, was also killed in the attack at Kyaddondo Rugby Club grounds in Lugogo. This loss and that of others were in sharp contrast to the statement Issa Ahmed Luyima made in the press conference following his arrest: "My rage was against the Americans whom I deemed were responsible for all the sufferings of Muslims around the world. Our aim was to kill Americans."³⁰ Yet, amongst the 77 killed, only two were Westerners: American and the other an Irish national. The media was particularly effective in airing the emotional images to bring this message across that the attacks killed innocent Ugandan people that had nothing to do with their perceived target. Secondly, doubt in the mission, that manifested as Haruna Luyima, who was supposed to detonate the explosive device at the dance club, changed his mind at the last minute. Explaining why, Luyima told a news conference in August 2010 that he did so because he didn't want to kill innocent people. This discarded mobile phone found became a treasure trove of information that broke the case open. According to Luswata Ntusi, a private investigator, Luyima, after failing to detonate the device, went and told some close relatives that his older brother Issa Luyima recruited him to plant the bomb and that he could not go through with the attack. Consequently, relatives reported this information to the police which led to the subsequent arrest of the four prime suspects directly involved in the attacks, as mentioned above.³¹

Overall, the investigation that led to the identification of suspects can only be classified as excellent. It serves as an example of how investigators should work together following up leads, often across borders. Challenges however came to light in the procedures used when these suspects were arrested and brought before the court in Uganda: Suleiman Hajar Nyamandondo, a Tanzanian national was extradited to Uganda by the Tanzanian government soon after his arrest on 3 September 2010. Mohamed Ali Mohamed, a Kenyan national who was detained in Tanzania in January 2011 was also extradited to Uganda.³²

26 Andante Okanya, Edward Anyoli and Angela Nalumansi, Kampala 7/11 bomb suspects confess, *New Vision*, 10 August 2010, <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/12/728385> (accessed on 11 August 2010).

27 Candia, Uganda detains top al-shabaab commander.

28 Global Jihad, Kampala Blasts 4 Main Suspects.

29 Ibid.

30 Global Jihad, Kampala Blasts 4 Main Suspects.

31 *Terror Free Somalia*, Uganda World Cup blasts: 36 suspects, 7 countries, 9 October 2010, <http://terrorfreesomalia.blogspot.com/2010/10/uganda-world-cup-blasts-36-suspects-7.html> (accessed on 10 October 2010).

32 *All Africa*, Tanzania Allows Kenyan Kampala Bomb Suspect Extradition, 2 July 2011.

On 17 August 2010 Joan Kagezi, the then Ugandan State Attorney confirmed that 32 suspects were charged for their suspected involvement in the bombings, of which fourteen suspects were indicted. While all fourteen were indicted for counts

1 to 89 that included murder (76 counts) and attempted murder (ten counts) under the Penal Code and Sections 7(1) and (2) (a) for 'Terrorism' under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2002.

EARLY HISTORY OF MAHMOOD MUGISHA

Mahmood Mugisha (born Emmanuel Muryango Mugsiha) is the youngest of six children who experienced an uncertain childhood. His father and mother constantly fought because his father claimed that Mugisha was not his biological son. His aunt (on his father's side) stepped in and took Mugisha to live with her to save his parents' marriage, but while he stayed with her, his relatives abused him. Not being able to stay, he moved back to his parent's house where his older sister took care of him. His mother later confided in him that his uncle (his father's brother) is his biological father. During this entire period, Mugisha had a very close relationship with his mother, but his father used a lot of alcohol which added to instability at home.

Knowing his biological father, although the two did not talk, Mugisha looked up to him. Then came the 1994-Rwanda genocide during which he lost his biological father which had a lasting impact on him. He left Rwanda in 1998 (aged 16) after rumors emerged that those responsible for the genocide are planning to return to the country. Being a refugee in Uganda, he was taken in by a Muslim family that accepted him and treated him very well despite being amongst other children in a refugee camp. In a conversation, Mugisha explained that what stayed with him was that while Rwanda is predominately Christian (Mugisha was growing up in a Christian household) he just witnessed the most horrific trauma, just to experience acceptance from people who practiced a different faith than his own.

He converted to Islam six years before officially joining al-Shabaab. After he converted, Mugisha attended a madrassa in Mulago, Kampala, studied to memorize the Quran. During this period (after

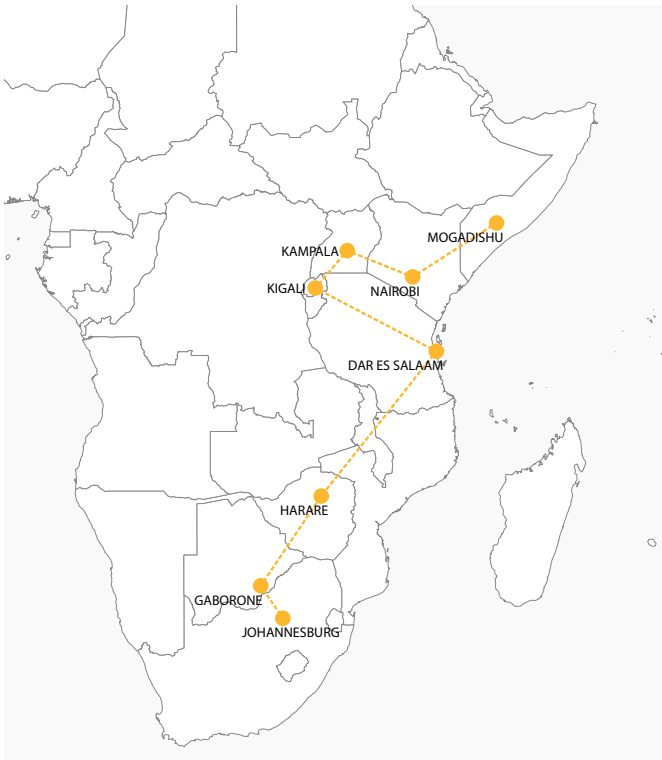
9/11) radical clerics highlighted atrocities committed against Muslims around the world that convinced Mugisha to join the violent struggle. Mugisha also explained that he at the time watched a lot of war movies, it was also being physically armed while being a member of al-Shabaab, that made him feel like a 'soldier' that added to the persona of fighting in defense of others in a cause greater than himself. This added to a sense of belonging as being part of a 'brotherhood'. He completed his religious studies at the age of 22 and officially joined al-Shabaab the following year. Mugisha put the period between first introduction (when he was approached by al-Shabaab) and joining at four years. Already radicalized, Mugisha left Kampala for South Africa - in fear of the Kenyan government forces when he attempted to travel to Somalia - where he continued his Islamic studies at Darul Uloom in Azaadville (outside Johannesburg).

In 2008, Mugisha travelled by bus from Johannesburg (South Africa) to Gaborone (Botswana), through Zambia to Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania), Kigali (Rwanda), Kampala (Uganda), Nairobi (Kenya) to Somalia. Mugisha decided to take a detour to Kigali because he missed his friends in Rwanda where he spent three days before continuing to Somalia. This estimated 7600km journey (see Map 1) took Mugisha to al-Shabaab frontline in Mogadishu.

The most important element that led to Mugisha's radicalization was the core need to be accepted and the need to belong.

Not being accepted in his family had led to a need to belong and to be accepted.

Map 1:
Mugisha's journey



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. :

Mugisha found this in al-Shabaab and rated his sense of belonging when joining at 8 and while being a member at 10 (the highest level of belonging) at the time under Nabhan. The organization became his family (when asked who is 'us' he indicated al-Shabaab) against 'them', whom he indicated as other religions. Considering the recognition he received from Nabhan, the sense of being accepted by other members of the organization and being respected as a soldier fighting in defense of others (especially recalling his fascination with war movies) Mugisha had a purpose and was seen. It is equally important to remember that he witnessed horrific scenes during the 1994 Rwanda genocide during which his biological father was massacred. On a deep psychological level being powerless and early history of rejection touched on both his basic and psychological needs as presented by Maslow.

Not being accepted by his parents, and broader family took Mugisha on a wrong path in the search of this very basic human need. Explaining the importance of acceptance and a sense of belonging, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides valuable

insights. Presented as a pyramid of five stages, a person's basic needs are presented at the bottom with more high-level, indefinable needs at the top. A person can only move on to addressing the higher-level needs when their basic needs are adequately met. In addition to love and belonging needs, John Bowlby in his Attachment Theory focused on the role early relationships, especially with parents, has on later relationships.

Figure 2:
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



In 1995, Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary presented their need to belong theory that placed the need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships as one of the most important needs. Going further than Maslow, they placed the need to belong closer to securing basic necessities to survive. To achieve belongingness, relationships need to meet two requirements. Firstly, people need to have positive and pleasant interactions with others. Secondly, these interactions cannot be random but should be stable, lasting relationships in which people care about each other's long-term health and well-being.³³

³³ Baumeister, Roy F., Leary, Mark R. The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. Psychological Bulletin, Vol 117(3), May 1995, 497-529.

These social relationships are important for the well-being of a person. According to Walton, Cohen, and Spencer, the sense of being socially connected, even if the person does not know others personally, can be enough to internalize the goals and motivations of others. Belonging is defined as an entryway to a social relationship, represented by a small cue of social connection to an individual or group. Social belonging is a sense of relatedness

connected to a positive, lasting, and significant interpersonal relationship. While mere belonging is a minimal or even chance social connection, social belonging factors are characterized as social feedback, validation, and shared experiences. Sharing common goals and interests with others strengthen positive social bonds and may enhance feelings of self-worth.³⁴

ARREST OF MUGISHA

Leading up to the attacks, on 9 or 10 May 2010, Mugisha explained that while *en route* to the Kenya/Ugandan border on 9 or 10 May 2010 he fell asleep and instead of driving to a less secure border post, the driver drove to the Malaba border post. Realizing that it was the wrong border post, he got out of the vehicle and instructed the driver to continue (with the explosives) to Kampala. Trying to cross the border on foot, he was detained for about three days by Kenyan officials before being deported to Uganda. According to Mugisha, Kenyan Immigration delivered him to the Ugandan Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force without him disclosing any information. Ugandan authorities kept him for a month. Without being able to gather information, he was taken to court and charged with forging a Ugandan passport, while being from Rwanda, although he stayed in Uganda.

After the attacks, Mugisha was rearrested by JATT to be later charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2002 for 'Conspiracy to Commit Acts of Terrorism under Section 25'. The allegation was that during the period 2008 till 2010 while in Somalia, Kenya, and Uganda he conspired with the al-Shabaab leadership to commit acts of terrorism using explosive devices with the intent to cause death or serious bodily harm.

To explain different approaches and the consequences of each, it is important to differentiate

between the Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force (JATT) headed by the military and the Counter-Terrorism Directorate within the police. JATT was created on 13 May 1999, specifically to "handle and quell" the outbreak of bombings in Kampala in 1998 in which the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (listed; CDe.001) was implicated. The head of JATT is a senior officer of the UPDF and reports to the chief of military intelligence who is the "overall operations coordinator". JATT was not created by parliament, nor was it given arrest powers; the thought behind its creation had more to do with coordinating intelligence and providing strategic guidance in preventing and combating terrorism. Mugisha explained that he was arrested by JATT after the attacks and alleged to having been subjected to physical abuse.

Reaffirming that physical coercion does not achieve the desired outcome, Mugisha explained that he lied to JATT interviewers and during the press conference at which those who were arrested were paraded. At this press conference, Mugisha explained that the order came directly from Ahmed Abdi Godane, alias Mukhtar Abu Zubair, who was the Emir of al-Shabaab till his death on 1 September 2014, without mentioning Nabhan and Ikrima. He continued by stating that al-Qaida recruited him in 2004 in Nairobi and that his recruiters promised him he would head to Dubai, but he was sent instead to a training camp in Somalia where he trained alongside at least 40 others from Uganda.

³⁴ Walton, Gregory M., Geoffrey L. Cohen, David Cwir, and Steven J. Spencer. "Mere belonging: the power of social connections." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 102, no. 3 (2012): 513.

At the time of this interview, security forces were not aware that Mugisha was intended to be a suicide bomber with very close ties to Nabhan.

Mugisha attracted the attention of Nabhan after Mugisha saved Ramzi, a close friend of Nabhan following a heavy battle with Somali forces in Mogadishu in 2009. Nabhan wanted to get to know Mugisha and praised him as a hero. Mugisha described Nabhan as a leader with a kind heart but loyal to extremist ideology of violent struggle in the name of religion. Being a brave soldier, Nabhan selected Mugisha for a special mission to become a martyr in the Kampala attacks. Many studies were

conducted to understand suicide terrorism as a tactic, as well as how, who and why individuals get involved in these types of attacks driven by religion to nationalism. However, in this case, Mugisha was selected following his bravery, but did not volunteer.

Although Mugisha was initially tasked with renting a house from where operations could be directed, he explained that since he would be a suicide attacker, he was less involved in the planning of the attacks. However, Mugisha was arrested on the Kenya-Uganda border town of Malaba as he attempted to enter Uganda from Kenya.³⁵

DETENTION AND CONVICTION

Mugisha and Edris Nsubuga were remanded in Luzira for almost one year before changing their plea of not guilty to guilty on 13 September 2013 to become state witnesses. Mugisha was also charged for being involved throughout the planning of the attacks that stretched over six months. In August 2010, when he was paraded before the press, Nsubuga confessed to detonating the device at Kyaddondo Rugby Club. Nsubuga who worked in a shop in downtown Kampala was a Bachelor of Commerce student at Makerere University. He also assisted the police to recover a phone he used to trigger the device.³⁶ He was sentenced to 25-years put under witness protection.

Mugisha and Nsubuga pleaded guilty, both were transferred to Kigo prison where they were held during their trial until they were eventually sentenced. Upon sentencing, Mugisha was transferred to Luzira prison where he was held in solitary confinement, where conditions were not in line with the standard international minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners.³⁷ He described the first seven months of his sentence as torture. The Officer

in Charge (OC) of Kigo prison – who is also originally from Rwanda – and John Ndungutse, at the time – head of the Counter-Terrorism Directorate, intervened to facilitate his transfer to this facility. This transfer came with more freedom, including being allowed to move freely in the facility between 7 am till 6 pm. Physical abuse stopped and Mugisha became involved in football that kept him engaged while also committing his experiences to paper.

In the end, Mugisha was sentenced to five years imprisonment for conspiracy and was released in April 2015. After he finished serving his sentence, Mugisha was repatriated back to Rwanda.

35 Nicholas Bariyo and Sarah Childress, Uganda suspects explain details of July attacks, *Garowe Online*, 12 August 2010, http://www.garoweonline.com/artman2/publish/Africa_22/Uganda_suspects_explain_details_of_July_attacks.shtml (accessed on 13 August 2010).

36 Hillary Nsambu, Edward Anyoli and Andante Okanya. Kampala bomber pleads guilty, *New Vision*, 14 September 2011, <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/13/765090> (accessed on 15 September 2011).

37 Mugisha alleged having been subjected to physical abuse, poor sanitation conditions and food.

DERADICALIZATION

Disengagement is important within the deradicalization process. At the time of Mugisha's arrest, he was still partly committed to al-Shabaab's ideology. Although Mugisha was unable to answer whether he would have been a suicide bomber if he was not arrested before the attack, he indicated that he was relieved for being arrested. Assessing why, it became apparent that Mugisha considered the organization not being the same after Nabhan was killed on 14 September 2009. Tactics including the beheadings and taking women for the pleasure of fighters was not what attracted him to the ideology or the organization. It was especially the attack on 3 December 2009 that targeted a graduation ceremony for 43 medical, engineering and computer science students of Benadir University in Mogadishu that stayed with Mugisha. The attack took place in the busy Shamo Hotel just as the graduation ceremony was about to start. Qamar Aden Ali (the Somali Minister for Health), Professor Ibrahim Hassan Adow (the Minister for Higher Education) and Ahmed Abdullahi Wayeel (the Minister for Education) were among the 22 people killed in this suicide attack.³⁸ These incidents started to create doubt to the point that he described as being 'so tired' (and relieved) of being arrested.

Asking why he did not disengage earlier, Mugisha explained that the organization was very effective in capitalizing on the fear of what would happen – most notably being tortured and sent to facilities like Guantanamo Bay – preventing him from voluntary disengagement.

A few events stood out that contributed to doubt as explained above. Building on these, Mugisha was confronted with the reality that his family, being Christian, would be an accepted target. In addition to being interviewed by the Counter-Terrorism Directorate, Mugisha was also interviewed by representatives from the FBI. While expecting to be treated harshly, the opposite occurred. He explained

that al-Shabaab used images of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay to justify its violent campaign and warn its members of the type of inhumane treatment members should expect when interviewed by Americans. In this regard, these images contributed to the radicalization process. While recalling these images, Mugisha expected similar treatment from US interviewers. Instead, a woman conducted the interview that immediately caught him off guard. Secondly, she used images of the victims – especially women and children – asking how he could be associated with the carnage, but she also showed emotion. He explained that he did not expect a foreigner (especially an American) would be emotionally affected by what happened in the attack. Victims being described as innocent that had nothing to do with Somalia or atrocities committed against Muslims elsewhere in the world added to the doubt he started to experience after Nabhan was killed. Even the attackers, especially Edris Nsubuga that was detained with Mugisha lost an aunt in the attack that Edris himself was responsible for. Mugisha also realized that the same could happen to his family, being at the wrong place, at the wrong time and also because they were Christian.

The second experience that further caused doubt was a female Ugandan intelligence officer who met with him. She explained that the head of the Counter-Terrorism Directorate sent her to arrange a meeting with him. Showing kindness, she brought milk with her and explained that Director, John Ndungutse asked her to give it to him. This interaction in his mind contributed to wanting to meet the Director, whom Mugisha refers to till today as his 'father'. The third woman that had a remarkable impact on him was Joan Kagezi, the assistant director of public prosecution and head of the International Criminal Division in Uganda's Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs that Mugisha refers to as his 'mother' till her passing in March 2015. Both Mr. Ndungutse and Ms. Kagezi

³⁸ The Jerusalem Post. 22 killed as suicide bomber hits Somali graduation. 3 December 2009. <https://www.jpost.com/international/22-killed-as-suicide-bomber-hits-somali-graduation-162143> (accessed on 10 December 2009).

built a relationship of trust with him (but also Nsubuga) that allowed Mugisha to not only share information needed in the case but also create an emotional attachment with both. He explained that Mr. Ndungutse spoke to him as a son in a manner that guided him to be truthful and not disappoint him. Both treated him fairly, guiding Mugisha to his best interests while not only focusing on the case but also being involved in his life. For example, Mr. Ndungutse was directly involved in his transfer from Luzira to Kigo prison, Mugisha also remembered that he brought and/or sent food to him.

Another factor that played an important role in Mugisha's deradicalization process, was the role women played. Continuing with the Attachment Theory explored when discussing Mugisha's radicalization, while both parents fulfil different roles in a child's development, a child first experiences a physical and emotional relationship with the mother. Mugisha had a very good and close relationship with his mother, whom he defended against his father. She also continued to visit him when he was in the care of his aunt. His relationship with his father, who rejected him from a very young age, at the time was more challenging. Insecure anxious-avoidant attachment in the case of Mugisha is a possibility. To explain briefly, children that experience insecure anxious-avoidant attachment often view themselves as unlovable and unable to attract care from their parents, making them reluctant to approach their parents even when facing difficulties because they know they will be rejected or punished. These children view themselves as unable to sustain the interest and care of others. However, they view others as able to provide support if their attention can be secured and sustained.³⁹ Although all women Mugisha interacted with since the time of his arrest were in positions of authority, all presented a softer side that he associated with his mother. In other words, these women represented a much deeper need that Mugisha longed for his mother at the time he was in a very difficult position.

It is especially important to note that Mugisha did not inform his mother, anyone in his family in Uganda and not even his wife of his involvement in al-Shabaab or being in prison after his release. Being ashamed and fearing resentment, Mugisha

experiences similar fears as any other former convicts who may face hostility among family members and society in general who is not ready to accept them due to their criminal record. In the case of Mugisha, it was possible to turn a new page in returning to Rwanda where he is not well known while having no contact with people who know of his former involvement in al-Shabaab. As a result, the criminal justice system should focus on a successful reintegration process to avoid the likelihood of reoffending.

Considering that women bring a different dimension to terrorism prevention as well as to prevention and countering of violent extremism, it is equally important to understand each situation. While this strategy will not succeed in all situations – especially for more traditional conservative men radicalized into violent extremism, it highlights the importance of knowing the personal circumstances of the person suspected of being involved in violent extremism. At the same time, this situation also serves as a reminder that female criminal justice actors have a valuable role to play in countering terrorism, violent extremism, as well as creating and capitalizing on a cognitive opening that may lead to successful deradicalization.

Since his release, Mugisha got married and had a child. He must constantly move but is still playing an active role in warning young people of the dangers of violent extremism.

39 Moretti, Marlene M, and Maya Peled. "Adolescent-parent attachment: Bonds that support healthy development." *Paediatrics & child health* vol. 9,8 (2004): 551-555. doi:10.1093/pch/9.8.551

LESSONS LEARNED FROM MUGISHA'S CASE

Although people are different and Mugisha's story is not that of another former member of a violent extremist group, there are still several lessons to highlight:

Understanding the individual:

For any deradicalization process to be successful, there is a need to first understand the person and his/her psychosocial profile. Understanding why an individual joined is only the first step in a much deeper process. Cognitive disengagement and deradicalization start with a personal realization of "I need to leave" for whatever reason. For example, in the case of Mugisha, what facilitated his radicalization (fighting an injustice) and his deradicalization (recognizing the injustice he is part of) provided a cognitive opening that those who engaged with him expanded on. In other words, although he was still physically involved in the organization, the seed of doubt was already planted that grew following witnessing what was happening around him. **Tailored psychosocial support is therefore necessary during the exit strategy in the deradicalization program as well as throughout the reintegration process.**

Facilitating and encouraging disengagement: Building on the above, there is a need to facilitate both cognitive and physical disengagement. Cognitive disengagement is predominantly a result of what the organization did. In the case of Mugisha, no longer agreeing with the tactics (beheadings and mass casualty events) and the ideology of the organization proved crucial. Questioning if Christians were really the enemy having grown up in a Christian household, also proved to be a crucial pressure point in his later interviews.

Treatment from security forces:

While a few officers treated him harshly, most officers treated Mugisha 'like a human being' and with respect. **Better treatment on the part of security forces is critical in both preventing, as well as countering violent extremism.** Being committed and being prepared to expect harsh treatment play into the narrative created by violent extremist/terrorist organizations. Even at the time, Mugisha started to doubt the tactics of the organization to disengage willingly was not an option based on a cost-benefit analysis in which al-Shabaab was successful to convince its members Guantanamo Bay will be the expected outcome. Successful work has been done to change the narrative, but more can be done especially working with families and individuals and/or institutions being trusted to facilitate disengagement.

Determining true commitment.

Even if deradicalization is a possibility for some extremists, others are likely to remain committed to the "cause" and refuse to renounce their convictions and the tactics being used. In the end, it is still an individual decision but even when the decision is made it is important to continuously evaluate why? Several assessment tools are available and although may overlap, it is still important to tailor it to address relevant circumstances to the organization and local dynamics within the country. Unfortunately, there are individuals that may manipulate the situation after identifying personal benefits and agreeing to participate without actually being committed to the process. Furthermore, simply assuming that lower-ranked members are more willing to participate in deradicalization programmes while high-ranked members or those involved in more serious incidents are less likely to be successful is a mistake. Understanding why a person joined, stayed and/or disengaged (physically and cognitively) presents valuable information on the process moving forward.

Deradicalization without a deradicalization programme.

The focus of deradicalization programs differs and often depends on the prevailing understanding of why individuals became involved in violent extremist/terrorist organizations. Therefore, some may lean more towards a religious-ideological dimension to convince former members of mistakes being made interpreting religious texts; others focus on skills development; while some may have a material component, the benefits of these initiatives equally differ. These 'benefits' may complicate assessing and determining if the person is truly committed or only participating for the added benefits. In other words, not only do these programs incorporate a theological dialogue in which scholars engage radicals in discussions to try to convince them that Islam does not condone terrorism, but they also offer tangible benefits in the form of jobs, training, and subsidies to encourage cooperation. As a result of this dual strategy, it is extremely difficult to determine whether a reformed extremist has experienced a true change in views (and is therefore deradicalized) or is merely responding to the inducements that have been offered (and is merely disengaged). Then there is the story of Mugisha who in addition to playing football or soccer was not part of a dedicated deradicalization program while in prison. Knowing that Mugisha had long conversations with John Ndungutse in which Mugisha described these interactions as 'speaking the same language'

"his deradicalization was the result of people treating him with respect, listening to him and acting in his best interest"

- and him knowing it. This is not to say that programmes being developed and presented is not important and can prepare a person to reintegrate, but often personal recognition of 'I see and respect you' can even be more powerful than any other structured programme presented without a personal connection.

Continue to stay in contact.

In the end, it is extremely difficult to determine whether an individual is truly deradicalized or merely disengaged; the only way to judge an individual's underlying objectives is by observing his or her words and actions, yet words and actions do not always accurately reflect objectives. Monitoring the person during this process but also after release and reintegration are a given. The question however is how this should be done? It is important to start with how it should not be done: Do not treat the person as a suspect - associated with harassment - after being released. After building a relationship with Mugisha, Mr. Ndungutse as well as one particular officer in Rwanda are still in contact with him from the position of respect and mentorship. Reintegration is not over in a few weeks; it is a continuous process during which the main concern is how to keep the person safe while assessing concerns and challenges in daily activities. Mugisha is still concerned about his safety and that of his family. It is especially here where assistance should be provided while working with the person. In Mugisha's case, it involved moving around a lot. While witness protection may be the best option, from a practical perspective, it is an option with limitations. Being deported back to his country of origin - as he was radicalized in Uganda - helped to a degree, but then the organization has a transnational reach. Different to other cases, Mugisha's family, together with his wife, are not aware of his past. More commonly the family and broader community are aware of the person's past. Mugisha's still being involved in sharing his story with vulnerable young people in Rwanda and speaking out of his first-hand experience are far more valuable than any other counter-narrative measure.



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