

Forum in Paris on Youth and Extremism

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Paris, France - A forum on "Youth and Extremism" took place at the Centre Culture et Paix in Paris Oct. 18, 2014. The focus was the current tragedy of young people leaving their families to join the ranks of "jihad" in the Middle East.

The main guest speaker was Mrs. Hamida Namane, an anthropologist, professor at Sorbonne University and consultant on intercultural issues. The audience was composed of Ambassadors for Peace and NGO representatives, notably from the association "Buud-Yam" that deals with integration of children and their parents in the immigrant community in France. Mrs. Brigitte Wada, head of WFP France, introduced the meeting and moderated the discussion.

The first speaker was Mr. Jacques Marion, president of UPF-France, who gave a brief review of the new book *Defusing Radical Islam* by anthropologist Dounia Bouzar, the foremost expert in France on this phenomenon. The book describes the process of "sectarian manipulation" causing these youth to leave their families, and raises a few fundamental issues facing the Muslim community in France. Mr. Marion explained from the viewpoint of UPF how interreligious dialogue and action are key responses to this phenomenon.

Mrs. Namane then gave a talk on "Jihadist adolescents: current situation and questions," reviewing the main characteristics of these "jihadist youth," how they are manipulated, by whom, what attracts them to join terrorist groups, and how authorities in Europe are dealing with them. The issue being on the daily news in the media, the discussion was intense and passionate and dealt more broadly with the question of integration of immigrant youth in France.

The forum was a joint project of UPF and the Family Federation for World Peace.