

What to do with Returning Jihadis?
Posted On:December 31, 1969

Parents know that teenagers must make some mistakes in order to learn, and we always hope that the mistakes are small enough not to destroy their lives. For most of us, they are. In my own case, for my daughter, that was so. Hers were small. Not so for my son, whose experiments with drugs killed him.

For the good liberal non-Muslim parents whose children have gone to Yemen to "learn Arabic" and wound up converting to Islam and becoming Muslim, their choices turned deadly. These children either became killers and now rot in prison or were killed. For Muslim parents both in Europe and America for whom Islam was not the center of their lives, their seemingly integrated children were lured on the Internet or by traffickers in the Mosque to become either Jihadis or to become the "brides" of Jihadis in the ISIS war zones. Their mistakes are not so easily undone.

What to do about these children if and when they try to return home does not have a "one size fits all" solution for antiterrorists. They fall into several categories.

\225 The girls. Teen-age girls, I am sorry to say, must be chalked off. If they cannot be stopped before they leave, they will be lost to you. They will be impregnated, raped if need be, and will become second, third, or fourth wives in a Jihadi household. They will die with the entire household in drone strikes if lucky. If not lucky, they will be executed (stoned) if there is any indication that they try to get away or behave in any way sexually unfaithfully. Beating and involuntary work will be their lot.

\225 The boys. One can do no better than listen to the reports of those young men who have managed to escape the clutches of ISIS. One young man, too frightened to give his last name or show his face, told an AP reporter in Tunis (Feb. 4) about murders, abuse of female recruits, starvation of recruits, knife-threats by those demanding recitations of Koranic verses, and murders of 120 foreign fighters trying to return home that he had personally seen. ISIS makes it particularly difficult by keeping their passports.

The first thing ISIS asks them is if they want to be fighters or suicide bombers. Some choice.

Even if these youngsters escape, they get arrested in North Africa or their home countries, which understandably don't trust them.

\225 Government Dilemmas. Yes, one must take no chances. We could assume that anybody who has gone to fight with ISIS is tainted and means us harm. Arrest or execute them all, or refuse to let them back into the country. That could be the hard line approach. But then again, our culture does consider the story of the Prodigal Son. We do recognize that young people can and do make bad mistakes and can learn from them. The task is to determine which ones have---and which ones are still snakes.

For this you need to quarantine and do plenty of interrogation. France now has 150 returnees, and they think that about 3,000 already in country need surveillance. Britain has arrested 165 returnees and Germany considers about 30 of its 180 returnees extremely dangerous. They cannot let down their guard.

\225 Prevention. ISIS has shown how good media can be for propaganda and recruitment, but we can use media too. Show that horrible video tape they made of a young Jordanian pilot, a Muslim, being burned alive. Do interviews with the disenchanted young people who have escaped and who tell us how they were treated. Do docu-dramas about how women are treated by these Jihadis. Make soap operas for their mothers. Do TV dramas about how prisons are used to recruit young thugs into thinking that being a Jihadi thug is an exciting option.

While you are about it, do some docu-dramas about wife abuse, about such cultural practices as honor killing, about the revival of using the earliest practices of Islam (hostage taking, decapitations, religious intolerance) rather than its highest values during its golden age, for Muslims to think about and discuss.

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