



Media Statement | 24 January 2024

## Religious Leaders and Youths Should Collaborate in Efforts to Address Extremist Narratives Threatening Singapore Religious Harmony

The latest case<sup>1</sup> involving a young Singaporean radicalised through online far-right extremist propaganda highlights the kind of new threats we face, demanding the attention of the interfaith community. Although this case is not directly associated with religious communities, the overarching concern about extremist ideologies and self-radicalisation posing a risk to Singapore's racial and religious harmony remains one of the key focal points for the Inter-Religious Organisation, Singapore (IRO). Over the years, the IRO has consistently voiced its concerns and actively participated in efforts to raise awareness about this issue.

This case, along with earlier cases of radicalisation, highlights how young people are connecting with dangerous groups on the internet, desiring a shared purpose, albeit concerning when it involves violent extremism. The IRO recognises the imperative for religious leaders and youths to collaborate in raising awareness about this issue.

Mr Noor Marican, President of IRO, said: *“Religious and community leaders must be attuned to the evolving nature of their roles, extending beyond the traditional focus on preaching the values of peace and unity. It is imperative to acknowledge the importance of understanding the varied online experiences of youths within our communities. This understanding will enable us to discern trends in youth sentiments and perspectives on global social issues, which can be integrated into the Singaporean context. Establishing regular intergenerational dialogues between religious leaders and youths, a commitment the IRO has upheld over the years is essential for fostering this connection and mutual understanding.”*

Within IRO, the Youth Wing serves as a platform for young individuals from various religious backgrounds to come together to advance interfaith understanding. These forums of connection cultivate friendships among the youth and promote mutual support and an eagerness to educate themselves about extremist ideologies, enhancing their vigilance. In recent years, the IRO Youth Wing has actively initiated interfaith dialogues and fellowship programs, demonstrating a continuous expansion

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mha.gov.sg/mediaroom/press-releases/update-on-terrorism-related-cases-under-the-internal-security-act-24-january-2024>

of their efforts. One such activity is the Kopi sessions with senior religious leaders, during which they have intimate heart-to-heart chats on various topics.

Rev. Terry Kee, Vice President for IRO, said: "*We at IRO are relieved to hear about the positive development in the rehabilitation of the 19-year-old Singaporean, initially detained for planning to attack local mosques due to far-right extremist influences. We thank the Ministry of Home Affairs, Religious Rehabilitation Group, and National Council of Churches for their efforts in counselling and guidance. Through this, the youth has been rehabilitated and taught to appreciate the values of peace and harmony. This development highlights the effectiveness of a comprehensive societal approach in preventing radicalised individuals from recurring hostile feelings and participating in violent extremism, ensuring their healthy reintegration into society*".

The IRO remains committed to supporting the government, religious and community leaders, and the youth, working to safeguard racial and religious harmony from divisive and extremist narratives.

For more information about IRO's efforts to promote interfaith harmony, please visit [www.iro.sg](http://www.iro.sg)

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#### **Past Statements from IRO on Similar Issues**

10 March 201

***The Inter-Religious Organisation Calls for Strong Efforts to Protect Youths from Being Radicalised by Violent Extremist Ideologies***

<https://iro.sg/press-release/the-inter-religious-organisation-calls-for-strong-efforts-to-protect-youths-from-being-radicalised-by-violent-extremist-ideologies/>

9 February 2021:

***Trends of Online Radicalisation Shows the Need for More Digital Efforts from Interreligious Community***

<https://iro.sg/press-release/trends-of-online-radicalisation-shows-the-need-for-more-digital-efforts-from-interreligious-community/>

27 January 2021

***Inter-Religious Organisation, Singapore Urges Continued Vigilance and Unity to Battle Extremism***

<https://iro.sg/press-release/inter-religious-organisation-singapore-urges-continued-vigilance-and-unity-to-battle-extremism/>