



Sylvain Landry Faye

Faces of Religious Radicalization in African Carceral Spaces



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SUMMARY

This concept note provides an account of our efforts to describe, understand and analyse how religious radicalization unfolds in African prisons and the types of responses that exist for its prevention and management. It is understood that this paper will not address the general causes of religious radicalization or its determining factors, as these can be multiple within global society. Neither does it provide a quantitative analysis of the radicalization situation in the prisons, as this would be difficult in light of the weaknesses of the detection and intelligence systems used on inmates on their arrival in prison.

Instead, we prefer to specifically document how the process of religious radicalization

towards violent extremism emerges, takes shape and develops in African carceral spaces. This paper will also review the institutional, interactional and organizational mechanisms within carceral spaces that may have sparked, incited or facilitated the entry of and identification with radical religion. Finally, it describes and analyses the institutional and organizational mechanisms that African penitentiary administrations have (potentially) put in place in response to the rise of religious radicalism in the prisons, and examines their strengths and weaknesses. Understanding the stages of radicalization in African prison environments can help to set up effective mechanisms to combat and prevent the entry of radicalization.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the events of September 11, 2001, in the United States, the issue of religious radicalization, which has been outstanding for years, has become more widely seen and heard in the international media. It was further amplified with the terrorist events of January 7, 2015, targeting the satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo. Radicalization is a dynamic process (as opposed to a state) which individuals may undergo at a specific time in their lives, and which is characterized by criticism and breach of the social contract and the adoption of extremist attitudes and positions. It takes the form of a switch to an extremist ideology that can cause the individual to take violent action, which may be more or less organized and is generally intended as a protest against the established order. Whether the issue is approached through its determining factors or its mechanisms, it is generally agreed at the present time that it is a *gradual process* in which individuals who are not known to hold such positions progressively adopt a system of extremist beliefs and attitudes that may lay the foundation for violent action (although this is not inevitable).

Today, the phenomenon of religious radicalization is viewed as one of the most major threats in the Western world, but also in Africa. On this continent, which seems to have been excluded from the debate, violent religious extremism is considered a serious threat to peace and security. Jihadist movements both in the North and South of the Sahara and in the Lake Chad Basin countries present major challenges to peace, but also to security in the Sahel-Saharan region and in West Africa. Certain “Jihadists” who are still on the ground in Syria and are very present in social networks and the Internet report that they have been in prison and that they met mentors there, by whom

they were indoctrinated. Some of them, who have returned from the Jihad or been arrested, are currently in African prisons, and others have been incarcerated for terrorist acts or incitement to commit acts of violent extremism.

These various observations show that religious radicalization in carceral spaces is an acute issue in African prisons and therefore has its place in the debate on internal and national security. African prisons are faced with special organizational needs in order to deal with that specific category of inmates, with a view to their disengagement and rehabilitation, and to preventing them from contaminating or indoctrinating weaker prisoners who are easily influenced by radical recruiters or mentors. This issue is also important because known radicals who are in prison have changed their attitudes, seeking to hide their proselytism by avoiding any objective signs that would allow them to be identified. This new situation is a concern for prison administrations, and particularly those in charge of management and governance of carceral spaces in Africa.

At the present time, it is important to enhance efforts to describe, understand and analyse *how religious radicalization unfolds in African prisons* and the types of responses that exist to prevent and manage it. It is understood that this paper will not address the general causes of religious radicalization or its determining factors, as these can be many within global society. It also does not provide a quantitative analysis of the radicalization situation in the prisons, as this would be difficult in light of the weaknesses of the detection and intelligence systems intended for use on inmates on their arrival in prison (this subject will be addressed below).

Instead, the issue of religious radicalization towards violent extremism in African prisons

will be documented in this paper through a specific discussion of how the process emerges, takes shape and develops in carceral spaces. Understanding the steps in this process and how it is empirically carried out in the prison environment can help us set up effective mechanisms to combat and prevent it.

In addition, this paper will review the institutional, interactional and organizational mechanisms within carceral spaces that may have sparked, incited or facilitated the entry of and identification with radical religion. Descriptive ethnographic data is also useful to help decide on improvements to the carceral environment with a view to better preventing the entry of radicalization. Finally, we also intend to describe and analyse the institutional and organizational mechanisms put in place by African penitentiary administrations in response to the rise of religious radicalism in the prisons, and compare them with existing experiences in other countries.

II. RELIGIOUS RADICALISM: A CONCERN FOR AFRICAN PRISONS

2.1. The security crisis in Africa has seen disturbing developments in recent years

The security environment in Africa in recent years has been worrisome. Governments on the continent are beset both by the transnational dynamics of organized crime (Guinea-Bissau with South American smuggling rings) and internal conflicts due to local rebellions (such as The Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African Republic and the Al-Shabaab militia in Somalia). However, a phenomenon that has become a real concern is Jihadist terrorism, embodied by religious fundamentalists from Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram, MUJWA, Ansar Dine, etc. Nigeria, for example, has suffered from this phenomenon for a long time with intensifying attacks by Boko Haram along the shared borders with Cameroon and Chad. In the countries of the Sahel, political stability and security have deteriorated significantly with the crises in Libya and Mali, this has played a role in weakening countries such as Niger, which is surrounded by seven international borders, including a 1,500 km border with Nigeria. In the North, the country shares vast and sometimes empty expanses with Libya, Mali and Algeria, where alliances of expediency have grown up between criminal movements and terrorist movements.

The particularity of the latter is that they are based on fundamentalism, which can be of various natures, but which creates increasingly violent extremist radicalization (Borum, 2011) among certain vulnerable social fringes (especially youth). In recent years, one of the

most commonly observed forms of radicalization in both Western and African countries was religious radicalization. Since the radical Islamist attacks, it has become common to link extremist religious ideology with violent action (Khosrokhavar, 2014).

2.2. A security crisis in Africa, against a backdrop of growing religious radicalism

The issue of religious radicalism and violent extremism has become an international media focus since the events of September 11th in the United States, further amplified by the attacks of January 7, 2015, on the satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo*, in France. The dynamics of fundamentalist Salafism in the West, calling for a return to the original tenets of Islam, has also long been present on the African continent, with the particularity that religious fundamentalism has been instrumentalized and associated with the propaganda of militant ethnic or political groups that threaten the stability of the sub-region.

For years, Jihadist movements both in the North and South of the Sahara, in the Sahel, have illustrated themselves with phenomena of Islamic radicalization. In Nigeria and Chad, Wahhabite and Salafist radicalism have spread, nurtured by ulama and Islamic NGOs. The Kanuri ethnic group, within which Boko Haram has recruited a high percentage of its members, views koranic schools as an ethnic marker. In Mali, the international Jihadist movement has put down roots, alongside active or dormant radical groups (the Dawa, the Tuareg of Mali, and the Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA)). The latter have adopted terrorist attitudes and have plunged the northern part of the country (and now

even the interior) into insecurity. Conservative and sometimes radical versions of Islam are increasingly gaining ground in Africa.

Religious radicalism has become particularly worrisome to the extent that it has reached young people in Africa. Young people, who are increasingly targeted by Jihadist recruiters, are more likely to be affected by the phenomenon (attacks in Grand-Bassam, Ouagadougou etc.). Furthermore, in certain countries such as Senegal, which appear to have escaped the phenomenon, a pro-Jihadist discourse is nevertheless present in the youth, particularly in the urban periphery. As a social category, young people are particularly vulnerable to religious radicalism to the extent that they are forgotten and excluded from the socio-economic dynamics of the country. According to certain observers, Islam is not the cause of radicalism, but rather the response these young people find for their malaise and growing feeling of socio-economic exclusion. In particular, it is a specific interpretation of the religion, which supports a radical proposition by charismatic actors who offer a unique analytical template to interpret the world based on religious discourse, beliefs and ideologies. This proposed response flourishes when young people are receptive (receptivity) and allow themselves to be convinced by the ideology. It is currently spreading in African countries through a number of channels, such as living spaces (neighbourhoods), social networks and associations, and the Internet, but also through prisons.

2.3. African prisons concerned by the dynamic of religious extremism

In Western countries, such as France, Great Britain and Belgium, prisons have been the focus of attention in recent years, as they are often viewed as springboards to Islamic radicalization and *incubators of terrorism*. This discourse has become common, since young Jihadists who have committed terrorist acts have been described as people who only learned about or encountered Islam during a stay in prison (Ouisa Kies and Farhad Khosrokhavar, 2014).

Particularly in Africa, prisons are the focal concern because they contain a growing number of radicalized youths who have committed acts of terrorism or violent extremism (Mali, Nigeria, and Cameroon). In Senegal, two Algerian Jihadists returning from Syria were arrested on the border with Mauritania and held in Rebeuss prison. These special inmates require particular measures on the part of the penitentiary administration to manage and disengage them while avoiding contamination of other inmates who had no known links to religious radicalism when commencing their sentence. Due to the presence of these radicalized inmates in carceral spaces, the prisons are a potential setting for recruitment and training with a view to radicalization. A large number of young people in prison had no previous links to Islam, and got in touch with those ideas for the first time upon arrival in prison, under the influence of recruiters or mentors. Some young African terrorists living in Syria, who are very active on the Internet, report that they met or got to know their mentors in prison.

2.4. Prisons do not create radicalization, but they promote its expansion

Certain authors challenge the idea that prisons are schools for radicalization or hardeners of violent extremism (*Veldhus T., 2015*). Their point of view echoes that of the members of the penitentiary administration who consider that the phenomenon is rooted in global society. Individuals are not radicalized by prisons or detention conditions, otherwise all inmates in African prisons would be radicalized. Khosrokhavar (2014), considers that more than one sentence imprisonment is required to be spurred into action. Furthermore, the fact that inmates convert to Islam in prison does not necessarily mean that they are potential radicals.

However, the debate bases the discussion on the comparison between approaches focusing on determining factors and those focusing on mechanisms. It is true that prison is only one of many parameters of radicalization. However, living conditions in the prison environment activate psycho-sociological mechanisms that can lead to the adoption of violent attitudes. Due to the incarceration of a growing number of youths and adults returning from the Jihad or found guilty of inciting or participating in terrorist actions, prisons have become a locus for interactions and meetings that can create conditions that promote and mechanisms that activate radicalization. Recent ethnographic research in African prisons (in Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa) has shown that prisons are places of learning, where reverse-logic hierarchies, identities and particularly religious identities are created. These situations can promote the spread of radical ideas.

Finally, although radicalization does not necessarily stem from prison, incarceration provides an environment with encounters, dialogues

and interactions that can expose certain inmates to radical ideas. The likelihood is increased by the fact that most African prisons are overpopulated, making it difficult for the penitentiary administration to occupy all those spaces with monitoring and surveillance. This generates a potential for the development of niches within which radicalization can flourish.

III. "FACES" OF RELIGIOUS RADICALIZATION IN AFRICAN CARCERAL SPACES

3.1. Quantification of all components of radicalization in prison remains difficult

In France, the penitentiary administration has established an institutional mechanism to measure the phenomenon (detection matrices, monitoring mechanisms) since 2014. The country has set up an intelligence mechanism to increase knowledge of the phenomenon with the goal of preventing and managing it. This has also yielded a significant body of quantitative data: in 2015, 349 people were imprisoned for criminal conspiracy in connection with a terrorist enterprise (compared to 90 identified in 2014). 1,336 inmates were identified as radicalized during that same year (compared to 700). Improved intelligence on the prisons, particularly with regard to radicalization, can be attributed to the detection system, which is applied to all prisoners. A different situation is observed in African countries, where intelligence on radicalization focuses more on inmates incarcerated on grounds of terrorism. In Senegal, more than 45 individuals (men, women, minors and foreigners arrested between 2013 and 2017) accused of promoting terrorism or having ties with terrorist organizations, were distributed among the prisons of Cap-Manuel, Liberté 6, Thiès and Rebeuss. However, it is currently difficult to quantify the phenomenon as a whole, since tools for detecting the entry of and identification with radical religious ideas in prisons are lacking. When they exist in certain countries, such as Senegal, they are based on objective indicators of proselytism, whereas inmates have increasingly adopted strategies of dissimulation. Detection mechanisms are not always well suited to ob-

servable trends in the behaviors adopted by inmates or their mentors. However, there is a growing awareness of the existence of the phenomenon in the prisons and current initiatives need to better integrate improvements in detection and intelligence mechanisms. In Senegal, a multidisciplinary unit (psychologists, sociologists, imams, wardens, etc.) was set in place by the penitentiary administration to work with inmates accused of ties with terrorist movements. This major initiative should be supported to facilitate detection and surveillance of the overall prison population, in order to better prevent radicalization.

3.2. Pre-radicalization is promoted by social and familial vulnerabilities

The ethnographic surveys available on African carceral environments show that, in general, religious radicalization is a complex process that begins with a phase of pre-radicalization whose roots are in society. It is true that various studies in the West challenge explanations of radicalization based on economic and political marginalization, poverty and exclusion (Crettiez, 2012). Indeed, it can be asked why individuals exposed to the same general environment (such as poverty, for example) follow different paths, some of them heading down the road to radical engagement while others do not. Khosrokhavar (2014) considered that the radicalization of young people of Muslim origin in France was not necessarily a reaction to specifically unfavorable political and economic conditions. In his view, it is symptomatic of an identity crisis arising from the tension between belonging to a society that has a hostile attitude toward them and their lost origins.

However, in the African context, while it is true that a macrosociological analysis of the issue is not enough, due to their various sociopo-

litical environments, certain social fringes have a hard time finding employment and feeling protected by the State. Furthermore, socio-economic insecurity in youth creates the conditions for vulnerability, frustration and social critique that can make young people receptive and lead them to criticize their society. They are pre-radicalized in their neighborhoods, and their frustration makes them more aggressive and more sensitive to the radical ideas and extremist discourse in their environment that seek to position themselves as an appropriate response to their situation. In other countries such as Mali and Niger, the high level of penetration of extremist movements in their neighborhoods affects younger segments of the population who increasingly seek refuge in or adhere to such ideology. In Cameroon, Boko Haram was able to take advantage of these vulnerabilities to make the far North into a logistics base, a fallback area and a recruitment pool.

These developments show that, in countries marked by the penetration of the fundamentalist religious discourse, the face of radicalization has begun to take shape in neighborhoods, in associations and various social groups. In such spaces, proponents of radicalism can captivate young people whose social, identity and economic vulnerability makes them increasingly receptive. This means that some of the people incarcerated in African prisons already have a certain sense of social criticism on arrival, a feeling of injustice or sometimes a sensitivity to extremist ideas, in reaction to global society. However, the majority of them were not determined to take violent action on arriving in prison and had not formally identified with the ideology at the time of their incarceration. They had committed offences against society, but one of their concerns was to leave prison as quickly as possible and return to their place in society. However, prison con-

ditions, the types of social interactions found there, combined with the inmates' individual, social and familial trajectories, can contribute to the creation and triggering of an identification process, which is one of the first steps on the ladder of radicalization.

3.3. "Identification" with radicalism through "covert" mentors »

In African prisons, inmates seem to be subjected to a double punishment: they are viewed as being at fault in the eyes of society, and they also live in quite harsh physical conditions in prison. These situations reinforce their feelings of frustration and injustice, which the prisoners seek to overcome. This environment makes them more vulnerable to radical ideology, which is offered as a possible option for combating their situation, which they perceive as unfair, and improving their lot in life.

In prison, frustration and exposure to various types of vulnerability makes some inmates receptive and sensitive to religious radicalism and violent extremism. This ideology is conveyed by promoters whose chief concern is putting across a radical ideology that imposes itself as the best and fairest response to the unjust situation they are experiencing. In prisons where the inmates have broken with society and are subjected to conditions they deem poor, "mentors" offer radical ideas founded on an opportunity to achieve a more appropriate identity, dignity for oppressed or overlooked social groups, repentance and purification. These offers bolster certain inmates in their will to criticize society and reject the existing frameworks for socialization.

Mentors operating in African carceral spaces are diverse and, for the time being, it is

somewhat difficult to create a meaningful typology for them. Although, in the past, imams and bearded men were labelled as religious radicals, this characterization is no longer operative today. Recruiters prefer to go unnoticed to more quickly negotiate a reduced sentence or release, enabling them to get outside and launch into violent action. They do not necessarily wear a beard, avoid interactions with imams to escape notice and, indeed, their ambition is to contest the legitimacy of actual imams. In Cameroon and Mali, they are charismatic, extroverted characters, but they increasingly seek to hide their proselytism and convey a discourse of dissatisfaction with social and political institutions that have become increasingly illegitimate in their eyes. In response, they propose superior values, based on the use of violent action as an effective means of resolving social injustice. While radicalizing mentors in prisons present varying faces, they no longer only aim to convince the highest number of young inmates to adhere to the cause of violent extremism (or Jihadism). They are also interested in certain "weak" inmates, whom they seek to indoctrinate in order to make them their relays and lieutenants in the task of recruitment and indoctrination in prisons.

3.4. Recruiting and indoctrinating inmates by isolating them from their usual social frameworks

The operating methods of these lieutenants in the prisons are so covert that they are difficult to identify, monitor or control. Recruitment and indoctrination of inmates takes place on a daily basis in carceral spaces, including in spaces of sociability, interactions and exchanges both in prisoners' cells and exercise yards. To the extent that Koran reading sessions are increasingly monitored by the prison chaplains or imams

promoted by the penitentiary administration, preaching is done subtly and continually in the yards, during exercise, in cells, in libraries, and during work. The interpersonal relationships thus established allow them to make themselves present and indispensable to vulnerable inmates and is a vehicle for radical ideas as the best response to their situation. In these moments of interaction, mentors often identify vulnerable inmates with whom they seek to establish a two-way relationship while offering them social protection. They also target prisoners who feel vulnerable and seek refuge under the wing of a protector to escape the violence that has become common in prison: although some agree to serve as sex objects for certain mentors to receive their protection, others identify with gangs or affiliate themselves with individuals who impose themselves as sources of legitimacy. Recruiters generally operate under those conditions, as their initial offer has nothing to do with religious radicalization, but is framed instead as social support and an offer of security. They often present themselves to their fellow inmates as friends and confidants. In Senegal and Cameroon, radical inmates can quickly spot prisoners who will be easy “prey” and introduce themselves to those people and a certain number of their fellow inmates as benefactors, coaches or disinterested protectors. This especially happens in pretrial detention areas where overpopulation makes it difficult to implement monitoring and control procedures aimed at early detection of activist mentors. Furthermore, to the extent that these individuals are in remand, awaiting trial, they do not always benefit from specific measures to combat recruitment and indoctrination.

Once ties have been created with these inmates who have a rather particular psychological profile, indoctrination can begin in earnest: to identify inmates and make them receptive to

the radical ideology they purvey, mentors and their lieutenants do their utmost to isolate them from their socialization frameworks and social networks (convincing them that they no longer need to receive visits or speak to their families) and present themselves as the only credible alternatives. By creating a rift between the inmates and their original social environment, they intensify their moral engagement with the radical groups and ideologies they promote. Once indoctrination has been completed, they can begin taking action, either within prison or on the outside, after they get out.

3.5. The different faces of inmates undergoing radicalization in African carceral spaces

Several categories of radicalized inmates can be identified in African prisons:

- There are those who are in remand or convicted for involvement in the planning or commitment of radical attacks and those returning from Syria. This category remains the best known to the penitentiary administration services and is the most closely watched; the prisoners concerned are often subjected to disciplinary sanctions, moved to another block or transferred to another prison.
- There are also inmates whose radical identification and engagement takes place before arriving in prison, but who are incarcerated for other reasons than terrorism. Believing they are in conflict with society and its norms, they covertly assert their affiliation with the Islamist movement, secretly advocating radical ideas (without, however, identifying with any specific group). They get very close to the vulnerable inmates they manage to recruit, which further contributes to their prestige.

- Prisons also contain detainees who are in for minor offences, and who do not necessarily identify with radical ideology, but strategically agree to affiliate themselves with a mentor or his group to obtain protection and escape pressure from toughs or other individuals bent on taking advantage of their weakness. They are not necessarily inclined towards taking violent action. However, while their support for radicalism may sometimes be strategic, due to the group dynamics generated by the carceral space, they can end up being authentically radicalized.
- Finally, there are prisoners who are incarcerated for committing minor infractions and who feel they have been subjected to discrimination, and their frustration leaves them vulnerable to radical thinking. This category expresses a strong need to affiliate with and identify with a group, especially in the carceral context. Rapidly identified by anonymous recruiters in prison, these inmates are isolated and indoctrinated by discourse on religion and violent extremism, accentuating feelings of malaise, discrimination and exclusion.

These few elements show that radicalization is a multifaceted reality in African prisons and that there are currently few statistics to describe it, due to the inability of detection tools or mechanisms to capture its varied modes of expression. This data also shows that prisons do not necessarily create religious radicalization, but that they are the setting of interactions that can promote or facilitate the process of recruitment and training of inmates (by their peers) on the ideology of violent extremism.

IV. RELIGIOUS RADICALIZATION MECHANISMS IN AFRICAN PRISONS

There is no denying that African carceral spaces currently present conditions that encourage and promote the process of radicalization of detainees. It is not prison in itself that radicalizes the prisoners; rather, it is the way it is managed and organized, but also how it is practised and experienced by the inmates that can create forms of interaction that promote recruitment and training on radical ideology.

4.1. Poor detention conditions create an environment that promotes radicalization

Overpopulation is one of the challenges faced by African prisons, which breeds the conditions for frustration and interactions that facilitate entry into the radicalization process. Overpopulated carceral spaces weaken security and reduce supervision, which can leave space for recruiters to operate unnoticed. They also make it difficult to obtain certain basic necessities or restrict access to them. In Mali and Cameroon, for example, the fact that prisoners lack access to certain essential rights (access to leisure activities, exercise, decent living conditions in a cell with no more than two occupants, less draconian conditions for family visits, etc.) generates a frustration that often results in greater receptivity to radicalization. This situation is increasingly observed in prisons where detainees are on remand and remain inactive for hours due to limited opportunities in terms of programs and productive work. Furthermore, the fact that detainees known for their radicalism are incarcerated in overpopulated, poorly monitored prisons exposes others to the risk of

indoctrination. For example, the central prison in Niamey is the only one where defendants and suspects linked to Boko Haram are sent. In 2016, it contained some 1,200 common-law and criminal-law prisoners, despite a capacity of 500 people. Such overcrowding is conducive to radicalization, creating niches in which terrorists can operate to recruit other detainees and convince them of their extremist ideology. Although suspected terrorists are isolated in special cells, this does not keep them from entering into contact with other inmates by telephone in their attempts to indoctrinate them.

Prison overpopulation is a factor that puts a significant strain on existing infrastructure, sometimes straining it to the breaking point. Insufficient penitentiary staff in relation to the number of inmates can create an environment where the most vulnerable seek protection against predatory violence by allying themselves with gangs and violent extremist groups. Combined with poor prison conditions and a failure to protect inmates' human, this creates an array of vulnerabilities that provide opportunities for potential recruitment and radicalization when violent extremist ideologists have the time and space to operate in.

4.2. Religious support does not facilitate disengagement

In African countries where the terrorist threat is increasingly present and audible, measures are being taken to prevent and manage the risk. Sharing of strategic intelligence between different countries, and reinforcing border controls and border security are among the measures taken in the countries of the sub-region. With specific regard to carceral spaces, there is a clear awareness of the threat among penitentiary administrations and a will to combat it. However, on a closer look, the proposed responses are much more designed around mentoring of detainees who are known to belong to Jihadist networks or incarcerated for having committed acts of terrorism. The current programs focus on working with them to disengage them through religious education, psychological support and the production of a religious counter-discourse. Furthermore, the social rehabilitation measures commonly applied to common-law criminals are the same ones provided for prisoners who are linked to terrorist movements.

More specifically, it can be observed that African States focus on a religious response to radicalization. In Senegal, there is a program for the social rehabilitation of detainees, based on improving their living conditions and providing vocational training and education. In recent years, a specific component for radicalized prisoners has focused on providing new job prospects and carefully monitored religious education. The contribution of Muslim theologians or islamologists is useful in supporting detainees and providing them with a more appropriate interpretation of the Koran. Indeed, they provide support for several types of activities, such as sharing of holy scriptures, preaching, and commented reading of scrip-

tures. They often have a mandate to produce a religious counter-discourse, with a view to explaining the scriptures in order to fight against the false interpretations purveyed by prison mentors. However, since they often focus on religious discourse, they act as though they were dealing with bad Muslims and forget that young people are also asking questions about their society that warrant consideration. These young people belong to a generation marked by a ritualistic practice of Islam, which challenges the figure of the older imams who have increasingly lost credibility in their eyes (a discourse that is also purveyed by their mentors). By focusing on religious counter-discourse and overlooking young people's major concerns, imams indirectly create the conditions for their own rejection. They push young people into the arms of radicals who use religious radicalization as a tool to respond to their social and existential anxieties. Prevention, management and support for "disengaged" detainees should also take account of the need to respond to certain of their pragmatic concerns in order to disengage and rehabilitate them. The experiences of Germany and Great Britain are an original form of ideological and practical support for inmates: young university students who have studied the scriptures are tasked with providing peer coaching, beginning by establishing a relationship of confidence. They spend time with them regularly and, in their discussions on social, political and religious issues, they can provide a counter-discourse and elements of counter-doctrine, in the name of Islam.

The fight against radicalization in prisons cannot be carried out by Muslim theologians or ideologists alone. In English-speaking countries, senior block residents and reformed prisoners are also given the floor and, through the media and debates in prison, they share their experience and answer other inmates' ques-

tions and concerns. In the United Kingdom, *The Unity Initiative* was set up by martial arts champion Usman Raja, proposing sport activities in carceral spaces, in order to build confidence and bond with inmates, become their confidant and offer them a counter-discourse to Jihadism. Morocco has recently set up a program entitled "Mosalaha" for prisoners convicted in cases involving fundamentalism and terrorism: it is founded on reconciliation with the self, with the holy book, and with society. It is also aimed at providing prisoners with religious instruction (proper perception of the holy book which contains values of tolerance and moderation) and legal instruction (accepting the legal framework) as well as psychological and socio-economic reconciliation. It is important to equip inmates with skills to enable them to do business and earn a living, so that they do not engage in violent activities.

In Denmark, the *Back on track* program has instituted measures aimed at families to support inmates when they leave prison and begin their social rehabilitation: For each radicalized inmate who has completed his or her sentence, a mentor is appointed to collaborate with their family. The mentor helps with administrative procedures, identifying training needs and helping to solve practical problems (such as finding an apartment, for instance).

V. ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS ILL SUITED TO RADICALIZATION

5.1. Penitentiary intelligence does not facilitate detection of radicalization

African prisons are equipped with an intelligence system that does not always do a good job of detecting radicalized inmates, leaving them free reign to recruit and indoctrinate vulnerable inmates. Nowadays, prisons have a set of tools such as the prison register and prison files to classify and track inmates. The latter is an individual file that follows each inmate throughout his or her detention, even if they change prisons. It contains complete information on the prisoner's identity, the reason for incarceration, etc. The file is added to throughout the prisoner's incarceration (the disciplinary sanctions applied to them, their detention conditions they are subject to, the work and activities they do, medical reports, etc.). However, it does not include information on changes in inmates' attitudes, discourse or practices during their stay in prison, which would facilitate detection of their entry into radicalization. Information on inmates focuses on security aspects and does not provide enough data on their psychology on an ongoing basis. This makes it impossible to accurately track and detect the moments when certain inmates change their attitude and swing towards radical ideology.

Furthermore, the current penitentiary intelligence system has difficulty identifying radicalization in prison due to the fact that prison wardens mainly focus on conspicuous symbols (such as beards) to discern whether people are responsive to religious radicalization. However,

these external signs are unfortunately no longer operative, since inmates have changed their operating methods and now avoid all external symbols that would put their proselytism on display. One of the models in this area is found in Germany, where an intelligence department in the penitentiary administration works with trained observers deployed in prisons to make observations and gather data onsite, on an ongoing basis. Observers collaborate with imams, anonymously monitoring and controlling the telephone calls, visits, letters and money transfers of all suspected or known radicals or people in the process of radicalization. In Germany, after the failure of an excessive involvement of security services and prison wardens in surveillance, it was understood that detection could hinder program effectiveness, due to the risk that the Muslim community may feel targeted and refuse to cooperate.

Another difficulty observed in African countries pertains to intelligence sharing. Outside of information sharing between government departments (security, interior, penitentiary administration, judicial police), there are not enough connections with social services, civil society or families. The latter could provide alerts or even better information about the characteristics of the prisoners, which would help make it easier to understand them and anticipate the risk of radicalization in prison. Drawing lessons from the German, British and Danish models, Uhlmann (2015) proposed an interesting model that combined community aspects (involving families to identify and report individuals at risk) with interventionist aspects (evaluating the nature and seriousness of the risk, intervening with families and developing appropriate support measures). There is therefore a need to develop the early warning system in African countries, with ongoing cooperation between civil society, families and

government departments. Interventions aimed at preventing religious radicalization should not only focus on ideological dimensions, but also take account of emotional and pragmatic aspects.

5.2. The inmate classification system does not prevent radicalization

In Africa, when inmates enter prison, they are theoretically oriented and classified according to three criteria: gender, age and the nature of their offence. Outside of those criteria, there is still no mechanism to classify them according to their radicalization or suspected radicalization. In recent years, due to the high number of cases of Jihadist prisoners or detainees arrested on returning from Syria, African prisons have set up systems either to isolate them or group them together in special prison cells or blocks (Niger) while others opted instead to disperse them in different prisons (Senegal). Isolating convicted terrorists so that they cannot have direct contact with other inmates is the most commonly used approach in Africa. However, the expected results have not been achieved. Instead, it has created no-go areas for guards, enclaves that are left to themselves and managed by the inmates who often turn them into training camps. These measures run the risk of creating hard cores of Islamist terrorist action, which exchange information on methods of action on the outside, an outcome that can be worse than indoctrination systems. Furthermore, even in a closed and isolated space, radicalized prisoners still have relationships with other inmates (while telephones are forbidden, they circulate widely in prison) and with various categories of staff members, and often there is no obstacle to dialogue or discussion. It is important for Western models that have not been evaluated very positively to be

redesigned and improved in African countries. In France, the failure of grouping measures prompted the authorities to opt for dispersal instead. Dedicated units (which promoted ghettoization and super-radicalization) have been replaced by “assessment units”. This strategy consists of using a grid to detect inclinations towards radicalization, based on specific criteria. The idea is to promote the dispersal of the people concerned in various sectors of the prison facility, to monitor them continuously and to write down all observations on a daily basis to ensure they are not lost and pass them on when the inmate is transferred. Violent inmates and those showing certain signs of radicalization are sent to special units.

5.3. Tools to detect radicalization in prison need improvement

In African countries, measures are in the process of being defined or implemented to specifically target inmates known for radicalization. There is not enough of a focus on preventing prison-based radicalization because prison wardens do not have sufficient tools or training to evaluate inmates’ behavior on an ongoing basis in order to detect their entry into radicalization, based on specific objective and subjective criteria. The detection grids currently in place are not endogenous and do not make it possible to monitor, supervise and anticipate radicalization and influence over other vulnerable inmates. At the present time, detection of young prisoners in the process of identifying with extremist ideology requires observation and psychological analysis skills that wardens do not necessarily have (Mali, Niger, Cameroon). In countries where there is a clear will to monitor prisoners to detect radicalization (such as Senegal, Nigeria and Mali), penitentiary administration staff relies more on stereotypes, running the

risk of confusing religious fundamentalists and radical Islamists. However, it is possible to define objective and subjective criteria based on which ongoing supervision can be applied. But the grid should not focus solely on religious practice, due to the risk of missing inmates who show no overt signs of religion in order to escape notice. Its application should be both cautious and discriminating, since it is important to avoid giving the impression that behind every vulnerable inmate lies a potential radical or Jihadist. France's experience shows that a detection grid can be based on various criteria pertaining to appearance, behavior, religious practice, speech, incidents in custody, inmates' relations with the outside, elements of their personality, their criminal record or their relations with the staff of the penitentiary facility.

5.4. Reinforcing the capacities of prison wardens to facilitate detection

Radicalization is all the more operative in African prisons where prison wardens and guards are insufficiently trained in detecting cases. While they have the necessary skills to ensure the security of persons, property and premises, they do not always have the ability to observe and detect the emotional, psychological and behavioral signs of a swing towards radicalization in inmates. It is not enough to observe people to detect radicalization; communication skills are also required, to create a relationship and win trust. In the absence of such skills, prison wardens, who are present one a daily basis, cannot always discern the starting point of the process, particularly since prisoners have moved away from the old "extroverted" model to a new "covert" model, which makes detection criteria more complex. In African countries, psychological and sociological training should be offered, not

only to detect security issues, but also to better assess the attitudes and behavior of detainees in order to anticipate cases of radicalism. Italy and Belgium are currently experimenting with training sessions (COPRA module) and internships to teach participants to recognize signs of radicalization. National prison administration schools should include this subject in their training. However, it is helpful to avoid simply transferring models that certain international experts can be tempted to propose.

Furthermore, overworked prison wardens have a hard time grasping all the different dynamics taking place in prison facilities. Surveys conducted in prisons in Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa have shown that carceral spaces are actually self-run by the prisoners and that supervision often stops at the doors to their cells. In South Africa, principally, inmates are locked up and left to themselves from 4 PM on. Thus, niches are created, which are controlled by charismatic inmates who may include radical mentors or recruiters. In these spaces where a certain legitimized violence occurs, the need for protection is even stronger, thereby enhancing the status of recruiters who position themselves as protectors. Mentors operate in such spaces in order to isolate and indoctrinate certain inmates.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis of the status and process of radicalization in African carceral spaces has enabled us to identify a number of concrete recommendations to improve the prevention and management of the phenomenon:

6.1. Building prisons and reforming the justice system to improve prison conditions

Improving detention conditions is one of the essential measures to be implemented on an ongoing basis to transform the carceral environment and reduce risk factors of radicalization. Important initiatives include current measures for the construction of new prisons and a political will in some countries to improve prison meals. Ensuring the protection of the most fundamental rights of inmates helps to reduce frustration and the likelihood they will respond to radical ideas. Furthermore, penitentiary reforms (alternatives to imprisonment, criminal chambers) are needed to reduce overcrowding in prisons and reduce long stays in remand, which is one of the situations that places detainees at greatest risk for radicalization. Tackling carceral overpopulation by building new prisons, but also by reducing the number of inmates in each prison, will facilitate supervision, listening and individualized monitoring of prisoners and help satisfy their needs under minimal conditions.

6.2. Promoting updated penitentiary intelligence sharing

To better prevent and combat radicalization in prison, it is important to improve penitentiary intelligence by moving beyond an exclu-

sive focus on security and promoting sharing between various sectors of the administration and civil society by:

- a. developing a penitentiary information-sharing mechanism between the Ministries of Justice and the Interior, social services, civil society and families, and penitentiary staff and administration;
- b. setting up a dynamic coordination and information-sharing mechanism on incarcerated inmates and new arrivals, in order to gather security intelligence, but also social and psychological data; and
- c. setting up a mechanism to gather data on inmates in the prisons on an ongoing basis and developing a strategy to analyse the data in order to shed light on practices whereby inmates are classified and re-assigned based on the risks identified.

Setting up a penitentiary intelligence bureau, informed by the judicial police, social services, anonymous observers in prison, families, civil society, could also promote information fluidity, circulation and sharing in real time.

6.3. Designing an inmate classification tool to prevent radical influences

Preventing religious radicalization in African prisons requires tools to classify inmates and orient them in carceral spaces on their arrival, based on complete prison files and data, which would provide a clear description of the inmates. This would help prevent radical groups or gangs from reforming in prison cells or blocks. In order to classify inmates and reduce the risk of vulnerability to radicalization,

regular risk assessments are necessary, based on an analysis of the files of new arrivals and inmates who are already onsite. Certain rules should also be promoted with regard to the orientation of inmates:

- a. Assigning detainees to cells, not only based on gangs or on the nature of their sentences, but also taking account of other elements contained in penitentiary intelligence that provides information about the inmates' social and familial trajectories.
- b. Improving surveillance by wardens in prisons, particularly through communication and social interaction between the inside and the outside (visits, correspondence and recording of telephone calls) and carrying out reclassifications where necessary. This makes it possible to rapidly detect negative influences and reassign certain suspicious inmates.
- c. Recent experience in French prisons shows that isolating radicalized inmates creates additional problems and has adverse effects. It is recommended to disseminate them in different prisons, while setting up a mechanism to monitor and assess their progress over time. This will make it possible to propose suitable alternatives according to the changes in their state of mind.

6.4. Informing prisoner classification with a permanent detection mechanism

It is necessary to set up a dynamic, continuous detection mechanism to detect radicalization in carceral spaces, in collaboration with various capacities other than the surveillance capacities of prison wardens. In order to implement

this recommendation, a culture of continuous research and ethnography must be promoted in the prisons to provide the penitentiary administration with empirical indicators (informed by specific attitudes and behaviors that are increasingly observed in prisons).

- a. The creation of *multidisciplinary committees in African penitentiaries to deal with radicalized inmates is a very positive initiative* that should be accompanied by better integration of the *"detection of radicalized inmates staying in the prisons"*. This is vital for a more preventive approach as opposed to a curative approach to the phenomenon of radicalization.
- b. *The committees set in place to support the detection, prevention and management of radicalization in the prisons should organize regular workshops and meetings to share observations on prison dynamics, and conduct real-time analyses to take decisions on improvements aimed at preventing radicalization.* That is why ethnographic and socio-behavioral studies are needed to conduct a Risk Assessment (danger, vulnerability and environment) and grasp developments in carceral spaces in an updated and dynamic manner.
- c. *Work on dynamic grids to detect radicalization with objective and subjective indicators applicable to detainees in African prisons.* These grids are not only applicable upon their entry into prison, but should be repeated regularly to anticipate the start of the radicalization process in a timely manner.
- d. *A dynamic and proactive approach is necessary in the prisons, by setting up a continuous mechanism to evaluate the risk of radicalization in detainees, including those*

in remand. It is important *to avoid contaminating the social action of prison wardens with intelligence imperatives*, which could break the trust of the detainees and drive them away, or drive them into covert behavior.

- e. *Early detection and early warning regarding radicalization processes in young people should involve communities and families:* Members of youth associations, from the same generation as the inmates, who have studied religion and former inmates who have been released are partners who can coach detainees, respond to their concerns (which are not always religious) and carry out dynamic observation of changes in their behavior for alert purposes. They can support social workers, mediators, criminologists, specialized educators and NGOs who are regularly present in carceral spaces in their work. Their connections, exchanges and regular information-sharing with prison wardens are essential aids in detection and management of radicalization. Inmates' families can also play an important role in detecting changes of attitude, discourse or behavior in their family members in prison. Partnerships can be established with families so that they can contact and inform the penitentiary administration when they have concerns about a family member who is incarcerated.
- f. Finally, *the involvement of these different stakeholders requires the establishment of a coordination mechanism* (through management committees) and especially sharing and reflexivity. Regular think tank sessions should be held for the penitentiary administration that include all of those stakeholders and focus on new behaviors, developments and trends that could pose a risk of radicalization.

6.5. Changing penitentiary training to adapt to the issues of radicalization

Prevention and management of radicalization in African carceral spaces entails *new and dynamic training of penitentiary administration staff* to better adapt to the new challenges posed by radicalization processes:

- a. Training is a key factor for a well managed penitentiary system, and it is essential for identifying threats to security and the smooth running of the prisons.
- b. The creation of national penitentiary administration schools (ENAP) in African countries is a good opportunity not to focus staff training solely on the aspects of security, event response, and prison rules and regulations. Initial training should be adapted to the new faces of African prisons and stress professional ethics, contact, communication and proper treatment of inmates, as well as interpersonal communication.
- c. Staff should also receive training on terrorism, the signs of radicalization and violence, and the identification of said signs. In Italy, the COPRA module (Community Policing and the Prevention of Radicalisation), used in basic training provided for all new staff members (all ranks and positions) provides a certain amount of useful instruction to help staff identify radicalization in inmates. In the Netherlands, prison staff receives an extended course of training on establishing individual contacts with prisoners, observing changes in their behavior and carrying out predictive profiling. With this in mind, experience-sharing is important in African countries today and certain models are increasingly imported and provided by inter-

national experts. However, there is a need to rethink the conditions of their adaptation to African carceral environments.

6.6. For religious, social and pragmatic disengagement programs

A relationship needs to be established with inmates that is not based solely on the ideological and religious dimension. Religious programs should be supported by other, more social programs and practical responses. The initiatives currently underway in Senegal are also interesting and should be reinforced: a management unit develops “re-education” activities including special coaching by psychologists and sociologists to follow radicalized inmates after they leave prison and understand the dynamics of their radicalization in order to set up a prevention component. Such measures can be reinforced by building confi-

dence in the detainees, through mixed group discussions between radicalized and non-radicalized participants, meetings with clearly identified professionals in multiple areas of expertise (imams, psychologists, sociologists, criminologists, former radicalized inmates, etc.). There is also a need to develop stronger partnerships with families and communities, which are essential elements in the management of released prisoners. They are also vital links often overlooked by social rehabilitation programs in general. Furthermore, there is a need to set up a listening mechanism for the families and entourage of former prisoners known for their radicalization. When all is said and done, rather than social reintegration programs, many more social rehabilitation programs, in which families are placed at the centre of the process, will be needed for radicalized prisoners after their release, or for disengagement of prisoners.

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The lack of security is one of the key impediments to development and democracy in Africa. The existence of protracted violent conflicts as well as a lack of accountability of the security sector in many countries are challenging cooperation in the field of security policy. The emerging African Peace and Security Architecture provides the institutional framework to promote peace and security.

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About this study

Generally, radicalization refers to a process of transformation of an action, individual or group that espouses an extremist political, social, cultural or religious ideology (Jihadism is one example) and adopts more or less organized violent action. The issue of religious radicalization has been around for some time, but it has become a concern since the events of September 11, 2001, in the United States. More specifically, the religious radicalization of young people in prison or having been in prison in the years prior to taking action has become the focus of discussion and debate. Africa has been left on the sidelines of this debate although the continent remains a highly relevant context for the

analysis of the issue. For years, Jihadist movements both in the North and South of the Sahara have given rise to phenomena of Islamic radicalization. Islamic extremist dynamics in the Lake Chad Basin countries present major challenges to peace, but also to security in the Sahel-Sahara region and in West Africa. It is therefore imperative to highlight this new formula of radicalization in Africa that takes place in the prison environment. Although this question is all too rarely raised, it is a reality that warrants more in-depth knowledge, study and preventive management at all levels in order to curb this growing phenomenon in African prisons.

