

# Intellectual War and Extremist Groups

UN HEADQUARTERS NY

## Summary

WANGO together with the Permanent Missions of Grenada and The Gambia to the United Nations held an event entitled “Intellectual War and Extremist Groups” at the UN Headquarters in New York on April 7, 2016. The featured speaker was H.E. Dr. Jamal Sanad Al-Suwaidi, director general of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR), and author of *The Mirage*, who presented his solutions to extremism and violence. Among those who attended the event were diplomats, as well as representatives of UN agencies, the UN Secretariat and NGOs.

In his introduction to Dr. Al-Suwaidi, WANGO Secretary General Dr. Tageldin Hamad described Dr. Al-Suwaidi’s spirit of commitment to author *The Mirage*. The book, which is 800 pages long, took eight years to write. Although he faced life-threatening situations, Dr. Al-Suwaidi worked with steadfastness and dedication to complete the work.

In *The Mirage* Dr. Al-Suwaidi discusses the struggle that Arab and Muslim countries are currently engaged in against extremist groups and organizations, and elucidates that the struggle is not only political and military in nature, but is also an extended war of an essentially intellectual nature. The author outlined the origin, evolution and arguments used to justify extremist ideologies which are at the root of the chaos in the Arab and Muslim world, and explained that the “mirage” are the myths upon which most extremist ideologies are based. Dr. Al-Suwaidi also spoke about current security challenges and threats and said education and the promotion of a culture of tolerance can be solutions to these problems.

After Dr. Al-Suwaidi spoke, several guests shared their reflections on *The Mirage*:

H.E. Dr. Mamadou Tangara, ambassador and permanent representative of The Gambia to the UN, commended Dr. Al-Suwaidi on his vision and ardor to advance peace in the world through his writing. He also said the book would have an important impact in the Arab and Muslim world by bringing a real understanding of the consequences of the teachings of various extremist groups.

Mrs. Yvonne C. Lodico, founder of the Grace Initiative, talked about Christianity’s message of love and forgiveness and how the *The Mirage*, which analyzes the allegory of Jesus and the fig tree in the Bible, can resonate very deeply in other parts of the world.

Dr. Christine Durbak, chair and CEO of World Information Transfer, gave a positive analysis of

the book, saying it exposes the exploitation of religion by leaders for personal and political gains. She also said she hopes Dr. Al-Suwaidi's book can help educate these leaders.

Rev. Dr. Douglas Thomas, adjunct professor of religion at Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania, said he considers *The Mirage* to be one of the most important books written on the origins of extremist and fundamentalist groups in the Middle East.

At the end of the event, WANGO honored Dr. Al-Suwaidi with its first Literary Peace Award, in appreciation for his courage and the sacrifices he endured to educate the world about extremism. On the same day of the event, *The Mirage* won the 2016 Sheikh Zayed Book Award for its "Contribution to the Development of Nations."