# Uniting for Peace

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The Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

Recent years have seen world order and peace increasingly eroded by the increasing menace of terrorist groups and individuals inflicting mass murder on innocent citizens in major cities of Europe and the wider world. The very recent terrorist incidents in Manchester, London, St. Petersburg and Stockholm, following previous atrocities in Paris, Brussels, Berlin and Istanbul, clearly show terrorism is now both a constant threat to civilians and enormous challenge to governments, international institutions and faith communities.

Uniting for Peace, a non-party organisation devoted to issues of peace and global security, very recently held its London Spring Conference on 'Global Terrorism - the Peace Movement Response'. Though planned for over a year, its timing proved grimly relevant, being held only three days after the Westminster incident. Consequent upon its deliberations, Uniting for Peace officers formulated *Principles and Policies to assist UK Counter-Terrorism Strategy, herewith submitted for consideration by relevant HM Government departments.*

1. **Resourcing Action for Community Harmony:** Recognising that internationally and in UK much recent terrorist activity has been organised or inspired by groups such as ISIS adhering to a heretical, perverse and hate-filled version of Islam - one condemned by Islamic authorities worldwide - we consider it absolutely vital HM Government supports all actions by Christian, Muslim and other faith communities and NGOs for inter-faith understanding, community harmony and positive engagement in society for groups and individuals feeling marginalised. We urge HM Government to make adequate resources available to local authorities, inter-faith bodies and other relevant institutions to help facilitate such actions for community cohesion and social integration. As relevant, these actions will involve appropriate officers of the regional police authorities.

2. **Network to Counter Terrorism:** Further to the above, and resolutely believing society must never accept the 'normalisation of terrorism', we urge HM Government, in co-operation with other political parties, relevant NGOs, to establish a 'Network to Counter Terrorism' for co-operation - including sharing of best practice - of bodies working to prevent terrorism. Such a network would actively involve youth, education personnel, civil society and social media, with the aim of developing a true 'culture of peace'.

3. **Resourcing Intelligence and Security:** Notwithstanding the 2017 Westminster terrorist incident, the UK Intelligence and Security services have generally been very successful in preventing 'home grown' terrorist actions. Nevertheless, the Manchester and the Westminster incident revealed that persons deemed 'peripheral' to intelligence operations may yet commit terrorist acts. The debate around this revealed the problem of providing adequate resources for such operations at a time of austerity. Since protection of UK citizens against the terrorist threat must have the highest priority, we urge HM Government to re-allocate finance from the Ministry of Defence for this purpose.

4. **The International Dimension - Role of UN:** In addition to established ongoing security and intelligence cooperation with EU states and other states to counter the terrorist threat, it is suggested HM Government further strengthen its counter-terrorism strategies by following the report of the UN Secretary General on the Plan of Action to prevent violent extremism. [UN General Assembly Global Counter Terrorism Strategy,70th Session, Agenda items 16,17, 24 December 2015].

5. **Understanding and Addressing the Root Causes of Extremism causing Terrorism:** We consider that understanding the root causes of the kind of extremism that leads to terrorist acts, especially by so-called 'lone wolf' activists, is an essential part of preventing such acts. The root causes are a complex mix, involving historical grievances, contemporary wars, US/ Western invasions and occupations of some Muslim-majority countries in Middle East with consequent great death and destruction, propagation of false and heretical understandings of Islam defining it at war with the non-Muslim world, religious and racial intolerance in UK itself, adverse effects of globalisation and other factors. While some of these issues are deep-rooted and will not easily be reversed, we consider that measures such as humanitarian assistance and development aid programmes to appropriate Middle East countries, and support for the Muslim community in UK [see 1.], are vital to reduce the appeal of extremism, as well as such technical measures as closing websites promoting Jihadist propaganda.

6. **UK Foreign Policy Measures:** US/Western policies of 'regime change' in Middle East, aiming to replace dictators such as Saddam Hussain and Colonel Gaddafi with democratic systems, have proved at best misguided and at worst very counter-productive. The overthrow of secular 'strong men' [however distasteful their rule, they

denied Jihadists a foothold] has so easily produced power vacuums readily filled by Jihadist and extreme Islamist elements, perpetuating violence and instability, and further inspiring international terrorism. Security experts agree that for the West to wage war in the Middle East is counter-productive, for it increases the appeal of extremist elements and thus heightens rather than diminishes the threat of terrorism. While UK involvement in Iraqi and international military action to defeat ISIS may be necessary at this stage, we urge HM Government to have a fundamental foreign policy review so that no further interventionist military actions are undertaken likely to result in more recruits for extremist Islamist ideologies and consequently more terrorism. In this context, drone strikes to kill suspected terrorists, but which so often result in the killing of innocent civilians, should be discontinued by UK. Senior CIA officials have pointed out that "drone strikes increase terrorism". Furthermore, UK should review its relations with such states as Saudi Arabia - whose promotion of Wahhabist Islam has helped provide the religious context for the emergence of heretical Islamist ideologies - Bahrain and Qatar, all believed to be sources of both weaponry for extremist groups in Syria, and private funding for ISIS. In all of this, we consider the emphasis of UK policy should be on diplomacy, dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts through mediation, rather than military action.

7. **We Are All One:** Getting away from an 'Us and Them' mentality fuelling social divisions, and racial and religious tensions, is a necessary part of creating that mindset which banishes the terrorist mentality. We need to re-affirm our oneness as humanity, seeing all life as equally valuable. To sense and affirm the oneness of the human family and of all life, is the wellspring of compassion and our commitment to human rights, peace-building, non-violence and reverence for all life. Re-emphasising this fundamental understanding is basic to all action to defeat terrorism.

Terrorism is a growing danger and seems to be escalating. We offer the above suggestions as a contribution to solving its menacing challenge.

Yours Sincerely,


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