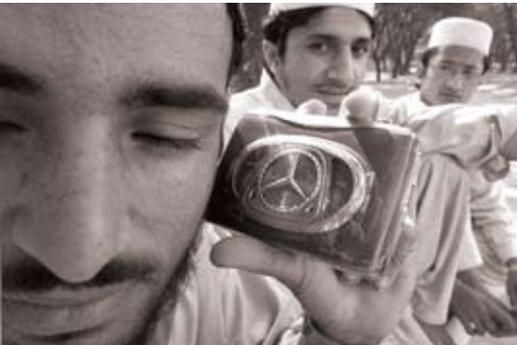




WHAT'S NEW?

NEWS FROM FONDATION HIRONDELLE | NUMBER 48 | JUNE 2016



Young Islamic Studies students listen to the radio in Islamabad (Pakistan), October 2001. Photo : © Stephen Shaver / AFP

A Plea for Openness

The name of God is being used in our global society for something that is absolutely contrary to true faith - for violence as something to be advocated. Those who kill in the name of religion have thus caught religion - which is one of the components of our society, whether we individually adhere to it or not - in an infernal trap.

Journalists report the facts, including civil wars, attacks and executions. They try to find out what social and religious causes there may be behind them. But current reporting on the state of the world inevitably links religion and violence. And so, in our picture of the world, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism or animism, depending on the part of the world, can become the threat and the enemy to be fought.

The media are caught in a vicious circle of manipulation more insidious than just clever communication. In order to escape that, perhaps we need to widen our field of investigation, extend our research into the religious dimension of our societies, so as to deprive the extremists of their monopoly. Because, to quote a Muslim dignitary, there is no holy war except the one waged against one's own demons.

Jean-Marie Etter, CEO
Fondation Hironnelle



Newspaper stand in Bamako (Mali), November 2015. Photo : © Issouf Sanogo / AFP

Journalism and Religious Extremism

In spring 2016, global Jihadism manifested itself with a series of particularly deadly attacks. Can journalists, whose mandate is to report facts, help reduce political and religious violence?

March 2016 was a particularly deadly month, with attacks in Iraq, Tunisia, Turkey, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Belgium - in Asia, Africa and Europe. These terrorist attacks left more than a hundred people dead and were each time claimed by groups such as Islamic State, AQMI, Boko Haram and the Taliban. These attacks do not come out of nowhere. They are the extreme result of social fragmentation and extremist religious ideologies, which are winning support all the more because they have financial backing. With a recruitment strategy that exploits poverty and desire for revenge, such groups' vision of identity can hardly be reconciled with the idea of openness towards others.

What can journalism do in the face of this religious polarization? Fondation Hironnelle, which has activities in several of the most affected countries (Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire and the Central African Republic) asks itself this question more and more often.

Mali was hit in 2015 with repeated Jihadist violence, culminating in the

November attack on the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako. Studio Tamani, the radio production studio created by Fondation Hironnelle in Mali, covers such news every day. The journalistic work developed here by Fondation Hironnelle is not only to report the attacks and the number of victims, but also give people a voice to show how certain communities like the Peuls are victim of misconceptions, or to talk about regional initiatives to improve the lives of young people who are potential recruits for terrorist groups. Studio Tamani also organizes live or recorded debates between all components of Malian society, including between conservative Muslims and those that have a more open view of their religion.

Fondation Hironnelle, which adheres to the Swiss tradition of peaceful cohabitation and has Swiss government support aimed at promoting peace and conflict resolution, is counting on dialogue, and relies on its media to get people in divided societies talking to each other.

Radical Preaching in Mali's Mosques

In December, the *Journal du Mali* dedicated a page of the newspaper to the radicalization of preaching in Bamako's 1,100 or so mosques. Radical preaching is becoming common in numerous mosques built illegally with funding from Persian Gulf states. Followers of more moderate Islam, which is more traditionally rooted in Malian culture, denounce this new way of preaching to the faithful.

"Religious extremism is becoming a real danger for the cohesion of our society," says Bréhima Touré, a journalist for the daily paper *L'Essor*. "There is an attempt to impose an intolerant form of Islam both with arms and with funding for charity work, religious buildings and training. The State must use its regulatory powers to stem the ardour of the extremists. The authorities should monitor the funding sources of mosques and clamp down on inflammatory speech, which is common on the many religious radio stations."

"State impartiality with regard to religious confessions has been one of the fundamentals of freedom in Mali since the time of the great empires," says Studio Tamani journalist Ousmane Diadié Touré. "It is vital to protect the separation of church and State so we don't lose points of reference that are the bedrock of our society."



A Studio Tamani "Grand Dialogue" on Responses to Islamic Radicalism in Mali, March 1, 2016. Photo: © Nicolas Boissez / Fondation Hirondelle

Studio Tamani, Islamic Radicalism and the Young

Studio Tamani is a radio production studio created in 2013 by Fondation Hirondelle. It broadcasts three hours of news and programmes each day, produced in Mali. Studio Tamani Head of Media Bernard Conchon talked to us about how Tamani covers Jihadist violence on a daily basis.

How does Studio Tamani report on Jihadist violence in Mali?

Bernard Conchon: Studio Tamani reports Jihadist attacks carried out by groups mainly linked to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI), and also reactions within Malian society. Three recent events required particularly extensive coverage. First the November 20, 2015 attack on the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako. The attackers, two young men of about 20, were both killed when the security forces moved in. Then on February 27 to 29, 2016, there was the conference on fighting religious extremism organized by Sabati 2012, a movement of Malian religious leaders, and in March 2016 some 200 radicalized youth in Mopti agreed to leave the armed groups of the Macina Liberation Front (FLM).

What have your programmes highlighted with regard to Jihadism?

Our programmes have revealed that the terrorist attacks in the Sahel, like in France, should make society question how it relates to its young people. Because it is the young, and often very young, who carry out these attacks. In the Mopti region (central Mali), radicalization seems for them to be like some kind of social and emotional compensation for a perceived economic or social wrong they have suf-

fered. Brema Ely Dicko, who heads the social anthropology department at the University of Bamako, estimates that only one to two percent of the young Malians who join Jihadi groups really believe in the ideology that they spread. Last March, civil society, MPs and religious authorities decided to act. They managed to persuade 200 young Jihadists, mainly allied to the FLM, to lay down their arms and begin reintegrating society.

From Studio Tamani programmes, how do you think dialogue on Jihadist violence is evolving in Mali?

A few months ago the focus was on the acts of terrorist groups, their recruitment and the security stakes. Now it is not limited just to these aspects, there are also calls for political debate. "Discussions must be engaged with the Malian Jihadists," says the Amenokal (chief) of the Touareg Ifogha tribe Mohamed Ag Intalla, who is also an MP for Kidal (northeast Mali) and member of the presidential majority. This position has also been supported in our programmes by representatives of the Platform and of the Coordination of Azawad Movements, two structures bringing together mainly organizations that opposed each other for a long time in northern Mali.



A Cordoba Foundation of Geneva meeting in Montreux, September 2012.

“Protected Mediation Spaces” for Peace

Abbas Aroua, director of the Cordoba Foundation of Geneva, talks about how his organization is working to promote exchange between cultures and religions and encourage research and debate on peace in the world.

The Cordoba Foundation of Geneva (CFG) has been working since 2002 to “promote dialogue between cultures and civilizations and foster research and debates on conflict transformation”. What have been your main achievements?

Abbas Aroua: The CFG, which works mainly in the Arab world and the Sahel, also works on tensions between the Muslim world and the West. We intervene on intra-Muslim polarizations, such as tensions between secularist and Islamist tendencies in North Africa, clashes between Sunnis and Shias in western Asia and Sufi-Salafist polarization in the Sahel. In some countries like Egypt or Chad, we look at tensions between Muslims and Christians. Our method consists of offering parties in conflict “protected mediation spaces” to get to know each other, respect each other and build trust, with the aim of launching joint initiatives on issues of mutual concern, thus helping to build peace. We encourage these parties to set up early warning and rapid response mechanisms to prevent intercommunal violence, for example between Copts and Muslims in Egypt. Our main institutional partner is the “Religion, Politics and Conflict” desk of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

What difficulties do you meet?

It’s long-haul work. It can take time before results show, and we attach much importance to the process itself. When parties in conflict meet for the first time, exchange can be sharp, sometimes verbally violent. But we see significant changes day after day.

What is your approach to the media?

With regard to the “protected mediation spaces”, we work out of sight of the media, respecting the rules of Chatham House¹. We need to allow the participants to exchange freely and calmly, whereas media pressure would make them take stances. Elsewhere, however, the media are our privileged partners in promoting a culture of peace. We work with satellite TV channels broadcasting in the Arab world to promote a method of non-violent political change and have co-produced a documentary series on this subject. In 2010, we organized a workshop on “peace journalism” in partnership with Al Jazeera. In 2014, we designed a project in Libya on the role of TV stations in defusing tension during the Constituent Assembly elections. And we led research on the role of social media during the “Arab Spring”.

Values of Islam

Islam has been present in Europe for centuries but is now more visible than ever. Immigration mainly from Muslim countries and an aging population, which now makes Europe the continent with the oldest population, have led to de facto multiculturalism for which no-one was prepared. This has resulted in tensions around such issues as secularism, gender equality and freedom of speech. The situation is of course made worse by a tide of references to Islam by terrorist groups, whose acts of violence are designed to flood the media with horrific images, leading the public to equate Islam with barbarism.

The Paris-based think tank Foundation for Political Innovation published in January 2016 a series of 11 studies on the “Values of Islam”, through which it hopes to present a humanist and progressive picture of Islam. The texts include *“Humanism and Humanity in Islam”* by Ahmed Bouyerdene, *“Women and Islam: A Reformist Vision”* by Asma Lamrabet and *“Islam and Democracy”* by Mohamed Beddy Ebnou. The series was published under the scientific editorship of Éric Geoffroy, an Islamic scholar at the University of Strasbourg, with the support of franco-Algerian Sufi Sheikh Khaled Bentounès. The studies are published as a collection by *Presses universitaires de France* and are available on the website of the Foundation for Political Innovation: fondapol.org

1. “(...) participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed”. - Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London.

Studio Kalangou, a New Independent Media in Niger

Since January, Studio Kalangou has been producing a news bulletin each day and a "forum" inviting society in Niger to hold a dialogue. This radio production studio is especially useful in the context of an electoral process in the first half of 2016.

On January 18, 2016, Studio Kalangou broadcast its first programmes in Niger (the kalangou is a small, traditional drum that is popular in the Sahel region). Studio Kalangou, which was initiated by Fondation Hironnelle in September 2015, has a threefold aim: to be a source of reliable information, help consolidate rule of law and national dialogue, and be an actor in the 2016 electoral process (presidential and legislative elections in February-March and local elections in May). Studio Kalangou is based in Niamey and has some 15 local journalists trained by Fondation Hironnelle. It produces one and a half hours of programming each day: a 15-minute news bulletin in three languages (French, Haoussa and Zarma) and a 45-minute "forum" in

French where citizens, experts and key players are invited to hold a dialogue. As of May 2016, Studio Kalangou will also be producing programmes in Tamasheq and Peul, so as to better give a voice to all the people of Niger. The programmes are broadcast by a network of 10 community and private radios in Niamey and Niger's regional capitals.

During the election campaign that ended on March 20, 2016, the day of the second round presidential vote, Studio Kalangou held forums where each candidate could be heard and where the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) answered questions from the editorial team, such as who can vote, where and how to vote.



Mariama Diallo, presenter of the Studio Kalangou news bulletin in French. Photo: © Pauline Bend / Fondation Hironnelle

Kandindi, a New Production Initiative in the DR Congo

Fondation Hironnelle's new media agency in the DR Congo aims to step back from the news to better document the rebuilding of the country.

Kandindi (which means a swallow in Tshiluba, the bird of hope from which Hironnelle takes its name) is a new audio-visual production studio created by Fondation Hironnelle in September 2015 in Kinshasa, recognized under Congolese law. Its editorial ambition is twofold: to open a field of thematic programmes which complement the news, so as to document the major issues of reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of Congo; and to work with the private sector, including businesses and NGOs, to highlight the initiatives of young Congolese on social and environmental responsibility and their positive contributions to the country. Kandindi's programmes - in-depth features

and recorded debates - are broadcast on a network of 90 community radios coordinated by Fondation Hironnelle in the DR Congo and which represent an audience of some 35 million inhabitants. They are also relayed on social media. Whereas the UN mission (Monusco) no longer wishes to use Fondation Hironnelle's services in the editorial management of Radio Okapi, the Fondation has kept a team of about 10 people in Kinshasa. Along with Hironnelle Communication, an agency producing general interest editorial content for institutional clients, Kandindi intends to become the second pillar of Fondation Hironnelle's sustainable activities in the DR Congo.

The Media Development Circle

In a world where political violence and incomprehension between rich and poor societies is on the increase, Western aid budgets - which are often cut - tend to be reoriented towards issues of security, to the detriment of cultural or media cooperation. In this context where impartial, fact-based information promoting peace is more necessary than ever, Fondation Hironnelle took the initiative in September 2015 of turning to new players it had not yet sought out.

The Media Development Circle (*Cercle Médias-Mutations*) is a network of important Fondation partners, bringing together individuals and entities from the world of business, philanthropy, civil society (international and national NGOs) and local authorities of the North and South who recognize their responsibility in the affairs of the world and the role media can play in building peaceful societies. Our aim is to build with them new ways of supporting Fondation Hironnelle programmes that use media to reduce conflict, promote dialogue and build a new understanding of openness to others. The impartiality of support from the Media Development Circle is guaranteed by agreed rules. A first project on parliamentary coverage in transition societies is mooted for 2017.

Jean-Marie Etter
CEO, Fondation Hironnelle

What's New ?

Quarterly publication
of Fondation Hironnelle

Supervising Editor:
Jean-Marie Etter

Operational Editor:
Benjamin Bibas
"la fabrique documentaire"

Translator:
Julia Crawford

Avenue du Temple 19 C
1012 Lausanne, Suisse

www.hironnelle.org
info@hironnelle.org
T. +41 21 654 20 20
F. +41 21 654 20 21

Crédit Suisse AG
IBAN : CH05 0483 5041 8522 8100 5