

Danaan Interfaith Dialogue Group representative (M)

Background

You are a well-known and highly regarded Muslim religious leader and co-founder the Danaan Interfaith Dialogue Group (DIDG). As a Nurul, you are sympathetic to the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD); however, you believe that violence is not the way to end inequality, corruption, and government repression. You have been speaking out against Danaan's endemic violence throughout the civil war.

You have personally been struck by the tragedy of this war: your son was killed in 2003 while fighting for the AFD. The loss was very hard to bear and you realized that families across all ethnic groups in Danaan were suffering much like yours. In 2005, with the support of other Muslim and Christian religious leaders, you founded DIDG because you didn't want any more youth to die for what you believed was a senseless war. Since then, you have led and organized many events around the country denouncing violence and calling for the restoration of peace.

In Danaan, religious leaders are recognized as leaders in their communities. As such, you believe that a group of diverse religious leaders across all identity groups advocating for peace and acceptance could have a significant impact on rebuilding Danaan's social fabric. People are tired of war; they are ready for peace. As religious leaders, you have an obligation to advocate for peace and you want to make sure that attention is brought to all affected communities across Danaan.

DIDG's mission is to bring people together from across all ethnic groups to engage in dialogue and seek ways to work together to end the violence and hatred that has consumed your beloved country. The organization has orchestrated rallies and protests around the country, publicly opposing the violent tactics used by the government and AFD. DIDG and the Peace Action Group for Danaan were two of the first groups to start an informal dialogue process in communities significantly affected by the conflict. Together with Peace Action Group, you organized focus groups of civil society activists across different ethnic groups to share their stories and explore ways to rebuild trust in their communities. DIDG and Peace Action Group complement each other in that both organizations are advocating for a more inclusive peace process and both have expansive networks throughout Danaan.

What you hope to accomplish

As community and religious leaders, the members of DIDG have much to contribute to the peace process. Your members have their fingers on the pulse of their communities. They know what is driving and sustaining the conflict. They know what is needed to achieve sustainable peace. Community and religious leaders should be included in the peace process to ensure that Danaan's many communities' needs are taken into account by the parties to the conflict. Based on what you've seen and heard thus far, the government and AFD are negotiating for what is in their best interest, not necessarily what is best for Danaan.

Your goal is to convince the government, AFD, and internationals supporting the process that the inclusion of civil society is necessary for the peace process to succeed. Specifically, you would like members of civil society to serve as an advisory council for the parties and/or mediator, with the

ability to influence the agenda and any agreed upon outcomes. As a leading civil society organization in Danaan, DIDG could serve as the secretariat of such an advisory council, similar to the role of the church in the Guatemalan peace process. The Peace Action Group could also play a vital role in the formation of an advisory council with its nation-wide network of leaders in business and academia.

You are traveling to Abayo (the capital of Trumont), where the peace process is ongoing. You would like the opportunity to meet with members of the Contact Group, because you believe they will be receptive to the idea of civil society inclusion. You hope to leverage your existing relationship with the UK Special Envoy and US Special Envoy to make inroads into the Joint Mediation Team.

To achieve greater civil society inclusion, you will also need to get the negotiating parties on board. This will likely be the most significant challenge; civil society representatives will undoubtedly bring in additional interests that will muddle the parties' demands. Your long standing relationship with the AFD Commander General will likely go a long way. The Commander General has in many ways looked to you as a religious mentor. However, he is very stubborn, so you will need to be prepared for a heated debate. You don't have ties to the government delegation, but you hope that your public persona will provide enough gravitas to obtain a meeting with the Minister of Interior.

You are aware that there are number of women's civil society groups that are trying to gain access to the peace talks. You could be open to working with some of these groups, as long as they represent some kind of constituency. Some civil society organizations speak for only themselves, which detracts from the purpose of inclusion. Further, you highly value the principle of neutrality and have tried very hard to maintain the perception of your neutrality throughout the conflict. You would open to working with women's civil society organizations that are perceived as neutral by both parties.

Capacity to create change

Based on your leadership in anti-war rallies and protests across the country, you have gained a tremendous amount of support among the people of Danaan. You and the DIDG have become a symbol of peace and hope for many, a neutral figure who favors only peace and has no allegiances to either side. As a Muslim religious leader, you also have particular influence over adherents of the Islamic faith, including many members of the AFD.

Relationships with other roles

You personally know the AFD Commander General and have a warm relationship with him. Your son also fought alongside the AFD Lieutenant Commander early on in the civil war. Your strong relationship with the AFD negotiation team is both an advantage and a disadvantage. You must be careful with this relationship so as to not create perceptions that you favor their side. You know the government distrusts you because of your perceived ties to the AFD.

You have worked with the organization Peace Action Group on community-level peace and reconciliation. You respect the work the Peace Action Group has done to bolster the leadership and advocacy skills of peace builders from all communities throughout Danaan. The Peace Action Group could be a good partner for pushing ahead your civil society inclusion agenda.

You have met the US Special Envoy and have shared your concerns of inclusivity and reconciliation with him.