

# Public Workshop Sociology of Muslim Terrorism: Causes and Consequences

## Speaker

Dr Jan Ali

## Date and Time

Wednesday, 17 September 2014  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

## Venue

Bankstown Campus  
Building 3, Room G.55

## RSVP

By Friday, 12 September 2014 (for catering purposes)  
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## Abstract

Terrorism in a general sense is an act of violence intended to create fear and terror in people and society for differing ends. It has featured in human history for millennia and continues to be perpetrated by people of varying social, economic, cultural, political and ideological backgrounds. In this sense, terrorism is not unique to a particular people or culture.

However, especially in the last ten years dubbed as “the Age of the War on Terror”, terrorism almost exclusively has been attributed by the media and some intellectuals and academics to Muslims to denote Muslim predisposition to terrorism, and Islam as its abode. Yet, there is no support for terrorism in scriptural Islam and a vast majority of Muslims are law abiding, decent citizens of their respective countries. Importantly, there have been numerous incidents of terrorism in the same period perpetrated by non-Muslims highlighting the cultural diversity of terrorism.

This paper explores terrorism not as a religious, but a sociological phenomenon. It locates terrorism in the crisis situation of the modern world or modernity and

seeks to demonstrate terrorism as a religious response to the crisis of society - economic deprivation, social inequality and political instability. It looks at some of the pivotal causes of it using Bourdieu's *A Theory of Practice* and his important concept of *habitus*, in it, as tools of analysis.

*Habitus* denotes an inclination towards a particular way of behaving. It is almost a natural world view that embodies us as individuals and to what we are beholden; ingrained in our bodies as well as our intellects, normally at the subconscious level. It locates individuals as social beings in a particular context which acts as a reference point and against which individuals evaluate all life experiences. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is employed to explain the nature of Muslim terrorism and redefine the contours of contemporary terrorism in order to replace it from its surrogate abode in Islam to its rightful domicile in the crisis situation of Muslim everyday living.

The paper argues that Muslim terrorism is a response to the negative consequences of modernity or the crisis of society. What we are dealing with today is a terrorism *habitus* evolved out of the crisis situations that afflict many Muslims. The roots of the terrorism *habitus* are deeply embedded in the negative consequences of modernity.

## Biography

Dr Jan A. Ali is a Sociologist of Islam. He holds a joint appointment as a Senior Lecturer in Islam and Modernity in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts and as the Community and Research Analyst in the Religion and Society Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney.

His main sociological focus is on the study of existential Islam. In recent years Jan has been invited



by a number of non-government organizations and government agencies in various Australian capital cities and overseas to deliver Public Lectures on Islamic Revivalism, *Shar'iah*, Terrorism and various other important topics on Islam.

Jan has published numerous peer reviewed articles in international journals and book chapters. He also published a book entitled *Islamic Revivalism Encounters the Modern World: A Study of the Tabligh Jamā'at*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 2012).

Currently Jan is researching *Shari'ah in Australia: A Sociological Perspective* using data based on questionnaire survey, collaborating with Professor Kevin Dunn, Professor Peter Hopkins and Professor Adam Possamai researching *Muslims on Campus: University Life for Muslim Students in Australia*, and working with Dr Michael Kennedy on a research project entitled *Resilience and the NSW Police Community Engaged Counter-Radicalisation Model*.