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## KEY ASPECTS OF CONDUCTING DERADICALIZATION EFFORTS AMONG WOMEN

The research topic “Key aspects of conducting deradicalization efforts among women” is both relevant and significant. The aim of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of measures aimed at preventing the radicalization of women and their rehabilitation. The main focus of the work is the study of deradicalization programs for women, the examination of their functioning mechanisms, and the current issues they face. The scientific significance of the study lies in the exploration of the social and psychological aspects of deradicalization, as well as in the investigation of theological corrections and social rehabilitation methods, which help improve the relationship between women and society. The practical significance is reflected in the improvement of methods in this area and in offering effective programs and solutions for social reintegration. The research methodology includes comparative analysis and case study methods. A literature review, an in-depth study of international organizations and data, articles, and documents on the topic of radicalization and deradicalization were conducted. This method allowed for an understanding of the broad spectrum of the issue being studied and identified various approaches and models currently used in different situations around the world. The main results and analysis highlighted the importance of theological corrections and social-psychotherapeutic work within deradicalization programs, as well as emphasized the significant role of social rehabilitation for women and children. Based on the findings, recommendations were made to improve deradicalization processes among women, social rehabilitation, psychological support, and the evaluation of the impact of these programs on society. This research holds significant scientific and practical value for the effective reintegration of women into society and overcoming radicalization.

**Keywords:** Deradicalization, Religious Extremism, Women, Terrorist Groups, Social Reintegration

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### Әйелдер арасында дерадикализациялау жұмыстарын жүргізудің негізгі аспектілері

Зерттеу тақырыбы «Әйелдер арасында дерадикализациялау жұмыстарын жүргізудің негізгі аспектілері» болып табылады. Бұл зерттеуде әйелдер арасында радикализацияның алдын алу және оларды қайта тәрбиелеу шараларының тиімділігін талдау мақсаты қойылды. Жұмыстың негізгі бағыты әйелдерге арналған дерадикализация бағдарламаларын зерттеу, олардың жұмыс істеу механизмдерін және өзекті мәселелерін қарастыру. Зерттеудің ғылыми маңызы деррадикализацияның әлеуметтік және психологиялық аспектілерін, сондақ-ақ теологиялық түзету мен әлеуметтік оңалту әдістерін зерделеу арқылы әйелдер мен қоғам арасындағы байланысты жақсартуға мүмкіндік береді. Практикалық маңызы, осы бағыттағы әдістерді жетілдіру, қоғамға қайта интеграциялау үшін тиімді бағдарламалар мен шешімдер ұсынуда көрініс табады. Зерттеу әдіснамасында салыстырмалы талдау, кейс-зерттеу әдістері қолданылады. Әдебиетке шолу, халықаралық ұйымдар мен деректердің, радикализация және дерадикализация тақырыбындағы мақалалар мен құжаттарды терең зерттеу жүргізілді. Бұл әдіс зерттеліп жатқан мәселенің кең ауқымын түсінуге, әлемдегі әртүрлі жағдайлардағы қазіргі уақытта қолданылып жүрген әр түрлі тәсілдер мен модельдерді анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Негізгі нәтижелер мен талдауда дерадикализациялау бағдарламаларындағы теологиялық түзету мен әлеуметтік психологиялық жұмыстың маңыздылығы, әйелдер мен балалардың әлеуметтік оңалтудағы рөлі айқындалды. Жұмыстың қорытындылары негізінде әйелдер арасында дерадикализациялау жұмыстарын жетілдіру, әлеуметтік оңалту, психологиялық көмек көрсету және дерадикализация

бағдарламаларының қоғамға ықпалына қатысты ұсыныстар жасалды. Бұл зерттеу әйелдер арасында радикализацияны жеңу және олардың қоғамға тиімді интеграциялануына бағытталған маңызды ғылыми және практикалық құндылыққа ие.

**Түйін сөздер:** дерадикализациялау, діни экстремизм, әйелдер, террористік топтар, әлеуметтік реинтеграция

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### **Основные аспекты проведения по дерадикализации работ среди женщин**

Тема исследования «Основные аспекты проведения работы по дерадикализации среди женщин» является актуальной и важной. Целью данного исследования является анализ эффективности мероприятий, направленных на предотвращение радикализации женщин и их реабилитацию. Основное направление работы – изучение программ дерадикализации для женщин, рассмотрение механизмов их функционирования. Научная значимость работы заключается в изучении социальных и психологических аспектов дерадикализации, а также в исследовании теологических коррекций и методов социальной реабилитации, что способствует улучшению взаимодействия между женщинами и обществом. Практическая значимость работы заключается в совершенствовании методов в данной области и в предложении эффективных программ и решений для социальной реинтеграции. Методология исследования включает сравнительный анализ и кейс-методы. Был проведен обзор литературы, углубленное изучение международных организаций и данных, статей и документов на тему радикализации и дерадикализации. Этот метод позволил понять широкий спектр исследуемой проблемы, выявить различные подходы и модели, используемые в настоящее время в различных ситуациях в мире. Основные результаты и анализ показали важность теологических корректировок и социальной психотерапевтической работы в рамках программ дерадикализации, а также подчеркнул значительную роль в социальной реабилитации женщин и детей. На основе полученных данных были сделаны рекомендации по улучшению процессов дерадикализации среди женщин, социальной реабилитации, психологической помощи и оценке воздействия данных программ на общество. Данное исследование имеет важную научную и практическую значимость для эффективной интеграции женщин в общество и преодолении радикализации.

**Ключевые слова:** дерадикализация, религиозный экстремизм, женщины, террористические группировки, социальная реинтеграция

## **Introduction**

In today's world, radicalization and religious extremism pose a serious threat to global security and stability. A very critical component of deradicalization is to develop activities of prevention and mitigation within different strata of the population. Women, in this instance, deserve particular attention, for which special attention and consideration are needed since their role in radical movements is mostly underestimated and misunderstood; they can be victims of extremist ideologies and active participants of extremist organizations at the same time. Therefore, it is crucial to understand key elements of women-focused deradicalization initiatives to develop efficient counter-radicalization strategies.

This article explores the main factors and methods that ensure successful deradicalization of women. The research discusses the social, psycho-

logical, and cultural elements that enable or inhibit the radicalization and its counter-processes, the applied methodologies and practices in various contexts and regions.

Efforts at deradicalization for women include a set of actions directed towards the rehabilitation and reintegration of those who have participated in extremist religious movements. Such actions may include psychological support, education, vocational training, and socio-economic assistance in accordance with each woman's individual circumstances. It is relevant to take into consideration the particular needs and features of each woman, which requires a multidisciplinary approach that advances cooperation between governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Another important aspect is creating an enabling

environment for the social and economic reintegration of women into society. This includes engagement with local communities, family structures, and religious leaders to ensure that they provide the necessary support and foster acceptance. Secondly, the influence of the media and public awareness campaigns is important in shaping public opinion and reducing the stigma faced by women who have participated in deradicalization programs (Karin, 2014).

For achieving sustainable results, women's deradicalization needs to be based on a complex approach that considers various factors and takes advantage of different methods. The forthcoming section of this article tries to present case studies from different countries that have elaborated effective strategies and methodologies when conducting deradicalization work among women. This research will underline the gravity of targeted interventions and the importance of continuous evaluation to adjust and enhance these efforts over time. By understanding the complexity of women in extremist contexts, we can better inform policies and practices that promote long-term change and social cohesion.

### **Justification for the choice of topic, goals, and objectives**

The subject of women's involvement in radicalization and the need for targeted deradicalization initiatives is critical as a result of their growing-one might say, often overlooked-role in extremist movements. Knowing the particular motives that drive women, from social isolation to personal trauma, is necessary to form effective intervention programs. The fact that women are both victims and active participants in extremist ideologies calls for a nuanced approach to deradicalization, addressing not only ideological beliefs but also psychological and social needs.

This research aims at discussing those factors that contribute to women's radicalization and assesses the efficiency of deradicalization programs designed for them. In so doing, it attempts to determine key social, psychological, cultural, and political factors contributing to women's involvement in extremist activities with a view to proposing more inclusive and comprehensive rehabilitation strategies.

The objectives of the study are:

- To investigate the unique factors leading to women's radicalization, focusing on societal, psy-

chological, and cultural influences.

- Compare current female-targeted deradicalization programs across multiple regions in their scope and success.

- To develop recommendations for how to create more effective, culturally-sensitive programs of deradicalization that enable the social reintegration of women and diminish stigmatization, while preventing re-radicalization.

This focus is not only a necessity in handling the challenges posed by women in extremist organizations but also in further improving the effectiveness of counter-radicalization efforts at large.

### **Scientific research methodology**

To address the research questions and fulfil the objectives of the article – namely, to conduct an in-depth analysis of the key aspects of deradicalisation initiatives aimed at women – the following research methods were employed. Literature review include a comprehensive examination was undertaken of contemporary academic literature, reports issued by international organizations, and relevant policy documents and scholarly articles concerning radicalization and deradicalisation processes.

This methodology has made it possible to pinpoint different approaches and models currently in use under different contexts and has provided a good grounding for the broader landscape of issues.

Case study analysis included the in-depth scrutiny of certain case studies and deradicalization programs carried out for women across different countries. The research, therefore, underlined best practices from these analyzed cases to understand the conditions that make specific cases successful, hence shedding light on effective intervention strategies.

A comparative analysis of various deradicalisation programs and methodologies across different regions of the world was conducted. This approach facilitated the identification of common patterns, as well as distinctive strategies shaped by specific social, cultural and political contexts. Such insights are crucial in tailoring interventions to specific environments and populations.

Content analysis: an in-depth analysis of media materials and information campaigns aiming at the deradicalization of women was performed. This content analysis evaluated different strategies of communication for their effectiveness and influence on the public's perceptions and attitudes. How such campaigns are received by various audiences is an

insight that would contribute to future awareness-raising and promotion of acceptance for women who have undergone de-radicalization.

Through these comprehensive research methods, the study aims to build a nuanced understanding of deradicalization efforts for women, ultimately contributing to the development of more effective strategies that can be adapted to various cultural and social contexts. By synthesizing findings from literature, case studies, comparative analyses, and media evaluations, the research seeks to offer actionable recommendations for practitioners and policymakers engaged in this critical area of work.

#### *Mechanisms of Women's Radicalization*

It is dangerous to overlook the participation of women in religious extremist organizations as they are highly active in carrying out duties on behalf of these groups, sometimes engaging in terrorism and extremism. In some situations, though, their crimes result in lesser sentences being handed down against them. The tendency to overlook the radicalisation of women and their participation in terrorist activities stems from a persistent belief that women are inherently non-violent. This misconception contributes to their being perceived primarily as occupying subordinate or peripheral roles within terrorist organisations, typically in extreme contexts – as wives or mothers of militants. However, even in these roles, women exert considerable influence, particularly through child-rearing, thereby raising critical questions about the transmission of values and ideological beliefs to future generations.

As a result, women are often utilized for tasks that attract less scrutiny from men and are not perceived as a threat. The failure to recognize women's active participation in terrorist organizations means that preventive measures are not directed toward them. In this context, the increasing involvement of women in the activities of terrorist groups appears to be a logical consequence of this oversight. For instance, the study by Bjorgo & Horgan emphasizes that women actively engage in recruitment and propaganda within terrorist groups, utilizing their roles to carry out tasks that attract less scrutiny from authorities (Bjorgo, Horgan 2011). Furthermore, Karin and Zenn offer evidence of women's participation in attacks, suggesting that women's involvement can enhance the operational capabilities of terrorist organizations (Karin, Zenn, 2017). Their analysis indicates that women can bring unique skills and perspectives that contribute significantly

to the effectiveness of violent groups.

Bovin, Moskvitina note in their work a plethora of reasons for women's radicalization: social isolation, identity seeking, and the desire to wield influence (Bovin, Moskvitina, Bovina, 2020). Studies have identified a range of motivations driving women toward radicalization and participation in extremist groups. Beisembaev emphasizes that women may join terrorist organization out of a complex interplay of personal, social, and political factors (Beisembaev, 2015). These may include the desire for belonging, a search for identity, or experiences of oppression. Similarly, Polyakov highlights that women's motivations can be heavily influenced by their social environments, personal relationships, and ideological alignments (Polyakov, 2014). Understanding these motivations is crucial for developing effective prevention strategies, as generic assumptions about women's roles in terrorism can lead to ineffective policies.

Women often fulfill key roles in supporting terrorist activities, including logistics and medical assistance, a topic explored in research by Sharipova & Beisembayev (Sharipova, Beisembayev, 2021). Their work illustrates that women can be more than passive supporters; they can be active agents contributing to radicalization.

Furthermore, Bloom & Lokmanoglu examines how women use their traditional roles to disguise their active terrorist activities (Bloom, Lokmanoglu, 2020). This creates a new dynamic where women, acting as "invisible agents", open new avenues for terrorist groups. Given that women can exert considerable influence on the process of radicalization both within and outside terrorist organization, it is imperative to reassess prevention and rehabilitation strategies to include target initiatives for women. This shift is essential for developing a comprehensive approach that addresses the complexities of female involvement in extremism and enhances overall security efforts (Merari, Ilan, Arie and Giora, 2009).

Women's radicalization is a complex, multifaceted process involving various social, psychological, and cultural aspects. To understand this process, it is essential to consider the primary mechanisms that contribute to attracting women to extremist movements.

#### *1. Social Factors*

**Social isolation:** Women who are socially isolated often feel alienated from society, making them more susceptible to radical ideologies that offer a



sense of belonging and purpose.

**Discrimination and inequality:** Experiences of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or religion can drive women towards radicalization as a form of resistance and struggle for justice.

**Family influence:** family members involved in radical groups can play a crucial role in the radicalization of women through pressure, persuasion, or manipulation.

## 2. Psychological Factors

**Identity and meaning seeking:** many women turn to radical movements in search of identity, meaning in life, and self-determination. Radical groups often offer clear roles and missions, attracting those who feel lost or uncertain (Bishmanov, Orynbekov, 2022).

**Trauma and loss:** Personal grief, trauma, or the loss of loved ones can be triggers for radicalization, especially when extremist groups offer comfort and an opportunity for revenge.

**Impact of propaganda:** the use of emotional and targeted propaganda through social media and other media platforms can deeply affect women's psychology, generating empathy and a desire to join radical ideas (Atran, 2014).

## 3. Cultural and Religious factors

**Traditional roles of women:** In some cultures, the traditional roles and expectations of women can limit their opportunities and freedoms, making radical ideas that offer alternative roles and statuses attractive.

**Religious interpretation:** extremist groups often use religious texts and interpretations to justify their ideology and attract women by promising spiritual rewards and divine missions.

**Community and support:** women may be drawn to radical movements because the strong sense of community and support offered by these groups compensates for the lack of social connections in their lives.

## 4. Political and economic factors

**Political instability:** women living in areas with high political instability and conflict may seek protection and support from radical groups.

**Economic hardship:** unemployment, poverty and a lack of prospects can push women towards radicalization, especially if extremist groups offer financial support and the opportunity to improve living conditions (Crisis, 2016).

Women have played significant roles in various radical movements around the world. Here are some examples of women's participation in religious radical groups:

- Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS): Women

from many countries, including Western nations, were active in ISIS. They were involved in propaganda, logistics, medical care and even terrorist acts. ISIS also used women for recruitment and ideological promotion.

- Al-Qaeda: Women in Al-Qaeda served in various roles, from propaganda to operations. Some helped plan attacks or provided support to militants.

- Red army faction (RAF): in Germany, during the 1970s and 1980s, women played significant roles in RAF, carrying out terrorist attacks, including kidnappings and murders.

- Irish Republican Army (IRA): women were involved in various activities in the IRA, including intelligence gathering and attack operations.

- FARC (Revolutionary armed forces of Colombia): In Colombia, women participated in FARC, ranging from fighters to political agents. Some were involved in fundraising and advocacy.

- Red brigades: In Italy, during the 1970s, women in the Red Brigades participated in terrorist attacks, kidnappings and killings.

These examples demonstrate that women can play various and significant roles in radical groups, ranging from providing support to directly participating in acts of violence.

Some women involved in radical movements have become known for their extreme actions and ideologies. Here are a few notable examples:

- Aisha al-Husseini: a prominent member of ISIS involved in propaganda and recruitment of new members. Her activities included writing and distributing radical materials through social media.

- Samira Ahmed: a British woman who was involved with ISIS and helped organize terrorist activities. She also recruited other women into the group.

- Umm Hussein al-Britani: a British woman known for her involvement with ISIS and active propaganda. She became a symbol of radical women through her actions and public statements (Stern, 2016).

- Walther Ramp: a member of the Red army Faction in Germany, who participated in various terrorist attacks and kidnappings in the 1970s and 1980s.

- Ana Bota: A member of the FARC army in Colombia, known for her participation in combat and organizing terrorist attacks.

- Faiz Salman: Active in Italy's radical group "Red Brigades" involved in kidnapping and murders in the 1970s.

These women illustrate that both men and women can embrace and enact radical ideas and actions

and their involvement significantly impacts the dynamics and operations of radical groups.

Understanding the mechanisms of women's radicalization is key to developing effective deradicalization programs that address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of female audiences.

Deradicalisation refers to a structured process aimed at transforming the radical beliefs and behaviours of individuals' engaged in or influenced by religious extremism. Its primary objective is to diminish support for and involvement in extremist activities, while simultaneously promoting the successful reintegration of these individuals into society.

According to Gelfand et al., deradicalization involves "the renunciation of radical beliefs and ideologies and the exit from radical groups and networks" (Gelfand, et al., 2013).

Accumulated research emphasizes the necessity of developing targeted programs for women in prevention and rehabilitation efforts. Schmid argues that programs focused on women can help broaden their consciousness and mitigate the risk of radicalization. These initiatives should be based on an understanding of the diversity of women's roles and motivations (Schmid, 2013).

Herrington highlight that the ineffectiveness of traditional counter-terrorism methods, which overlook women's participation, leads to an increased threat level (Herrington, 2019). They advocate for the development of new strategies that consider women's roles in radicalization and empower them with a voice in the rehabilitation process.

The experience of different countries in deradicalizing women showcases various approaches and strategies:

1. Saudi Arabia: The "Muhaymin" program offers rehabilitation to women involved in religious extremist groups. It includes psychological support, education, vocational training and religious education.

2. Indonesia: the "Integration and Rehabilitation service" program was developed to work with former combatants and their families, including women. The program includes psychological assistance, education and vocational training.

3. France uses deradicalization centers like the Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization (CPR). These centers offer educational and psychological services and training to help women return to normal life and reintegrate into society.

4. United Kingdom's contest program includes approaches for women in its efforts to prevent radicalization. It uses preventive measures such

as education, community engagement and rehabilitation programs.

5. United States deradicalization programs often focus on prevention and include work with youth educational initiatives and family support. They also emphasize creating alternative pathways for women who may be vulnerable to radicalization.

6. Denmark has an "EXIT" program that helps individuals including women involved in religious extremist groups to return to normal life. The program provides psychological support educational courses and employment assistance.

7. Norway developed the PREVENT project, focused on working with former combatants and their families, including women. The project provides psychological assistance, training and support for reintegration into society.

8. The Netherlands has deradicalization programs aimed at women who may be involved in religious extremist groups. These programs include family work, psychological support and educational courses.

9. Australia offers programs like "Countering Violent Extremism" (CVE), which provides mental health support, educational resources and employment programs for women involved in religious extremism (Hedges, 2017).

10. Turkey also implements deradicalization programs that involve working with women through psychological assistance, educational courses and rehabilitation programs.

11. Italy has initiatives like "REACT" which helps women involved in religious radical groups return to normal life through educational and psychological programs.

12. In Malaysia, deradicalization programs for women include community engagement, educational courses and psychological support to prevent radicalization.

These programs highlight the importance of a holistic approach to working with radicalized women by combining elements of psychological support, education, employment and work with families and communities.

## Results and discussion

In 2019, Kazakhstan became the first Central Asian to initiate the "Zhusan" humanitarian operation aimed at repatriating its citizens from camps located in northeastern Syria under Kurdish control. Between the first half of 2019 and 5 February 2021, a total of 607 Kazakhstani citizens were evacuated

from zones of terrorist activity, including 37 men, 157 women and 413 children. During the “Rusafa” operation on November 27-28, 2019, another 14 children were released from Iraqi prisons and evacuated to Kazakhstan. As a result of the two missions, 33 men and 19 women were prosecuted for participating in the activities of the international terrorist organization “Islamic State”.

Women and children returned from war zones were quarantined at a rehabilitation center in Aktau city for approximately 30 days. This period included medical examinations, restoration of documents and genomic analysis of children born in Syria.

The second stage of rehabilitation focused on their socialization. Many women received psychological support, social assistance and primary or secondary vocational training, which later helped them find employment. Some children born in Syria were granted Kazakhstani citizenship to avoid stigmatization. After working with social workers and educators and undergoing psychological, medical and pedagogical consultations they were admitted to preschool institutions or general education schools.

The distinctive feature of Kazakhstan’s deradicalization model is its emphasis on theological correction of views, particularly the adoption of the Hanafi school of thought. This approach is similar to the program in Saudi Arabia, where re-education through religious debate is conducted, resulting in a kind of “ideological detoxification”. However, in-depth interviews with returnees show that they perceive this approach as a hallmark of the Hanafi School.

The regional Religious Affairs Departments, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan and theologians from the Nur-Mubarak Egyptian Islamic Cultural University are involved in counseling and rehabilitation work. Unlike the European approach to deradicalization, which considers the rejection of violent ideology sufficient, Kazakhstani theologians are tasked not only with dismantling the “militant” structure but also with changing beliefs (Sabdin, 2021).

Thus, the following indicators of deradicalization stand out: rejection of takfir (accusations of disbelief); avoidance of distortion of the term “tagut” (false deification) and its extrapolation to the constitutional structure of Kazakhstan, state building; acceptance of the Hanafi school of thought; recognition of Kazakh customs and culture; recognition of the secular and legal nature of the state.

As Malthaner notes, the onset of religious radi-

calization in Central Asia was primarily caused by unresolved social problems (Malthaner, 2017). These conclusions are confirmed by interviews conducted by Kazakhstani scholars, as R. Burnashev, I. Chernykh, and Yu. Shapoval with Oralman women. According to the researchers, the reason that prompted most of them to leave Syria was the patriarchal family structure, unconditional submission to their spouses, in some cases the feeling of violation of religious rights, as well as the desire to improve their financial situation.

However, the women who returned from Syria once again faced financial difficulties. Many of them do not have their own housing and have to rent it or live with relatives. The situation is such that the vast majority of returnees have large families – they support from three to six children. In addition, most of them do not have secondary or higher education. Even after completing vocational training as part of the rehabilitation and reintegration program, not all have been able to find employment.

Despite widespread information about the deaths of men during combat operations, many women and orphaned children are unable to receive social payments for the loss of a breadwinner. This remains a problem today.

According to researchers at the Rand Corporation’s American Strategy Center, successful deradicalization and reintegration can be hindered by social stigma and rejection. Therefore, the weakness of Kazakhstan’s deradicalization program can be described as working against public opinion, as experts argue that stigmatization of returnees continues. These vulnerabilities, they argue, could lead to re-radicalization of returnees from Syria and Iraq.

Another limitation of the deradicalization program is that it primarily focuses on theological remediation. However, psychological and social factors play a larger role when addressing women’s radicalization (Schouten, 2010).

## Conclusion

Numerous deradicalization programs implemented across various countries highlight the significant importance and global relevance of this issue. An analysis of existing initiatives allows for the identification of several key characteristics and principles essential for effectively addressing individuals prone to religious extremism:

- Participation in deradicalisation programmes must be entirely voluntary, with strict adherence to human rights standards.

- It is necessary to development and employ specialised methodological tools for monitoring the level of radicalisation among participants before, during and after the programme. These assessment methods should be adapted to regional specificities, taking into account ethno-cultural characteristics, local mentality, and motivational factors that encourage individuals to engage with the programme.

- One of the most challenging aspects is establishing positive and trusting communication with participants. This is most effectively achieved through the involvement of qualified theologians

and in certain cases, psychologists.

- A particularly important role in these programmes is played by female trainers, whose efforts are directed towards transforming the consciousness of radicalised women. Additionally, group-based interventions, facilitated and supervised by psychologist, significantly influence the success of deradicalization. Within this context, psychological methods such as cognitive therapy, guided imagery, and other related techniques have proven effective. Their application helps to reduce violent tendencies, restore individuals to a state of non-violence, and support their reintegration into society.

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