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A full-page report appeared two days ago in a local Arabic daily paper which said that terror organizations entice youngsters to their ranks by means of the temptation of fame and dreams of Paradise.

Those interviewed stated that social media is the main culprit. Others said that the strict rules for acceptance by some universities made students apply elsewhere which often required them to live far from their homes. I am always amazed at how we repeatedly blame factors that are totally irrelevant to the rise of extremism.

Let's be very frank. The first cause is family upbringing. The lack of parental monitoring and family cohesion along with the absence of role models are main factors. Add to that self-appointed sheikhs who spew venom against community members of other sects and preach violence against them. I myself have on many occasions heard hatred being poured on others from the pulpit and have even complained about it.

Then, of course, there are those teachers who prey upon the minds of the young. Their deviant ideological narrative is spread in the classroom. A father once complained to me that his son's physics teacher told the class that "THOSE WHO LISTEN TO MUSIC WILL HAVE THEIR BRAINS PIERCED WITH BURNING IRON RODS ON THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT".

He removed his son from that school and sent him to the United Kingdom. However, not all families can do that. I strongly believe that the educational sector has a lot of "sleeping" extremist teachers. And over the years they have grown in number. The government is making efforts to remove them from the education system, but it will take some time to reverse the damage that they have done. A whole generation has suffered.

With sadness I have witnessed my own city of Jeddah slowly being transformed from a gentle, tolerant and accepting place to a harsher environment where bands of men, official and unofficial, roam the streets telling women to cover their faces and asking people if they have prayed or not. They harass people with segregation rules that divide families and label normal interaction between respectable men and women as immoral behavior.

Who is to blame for all of this? We are!

Because we have kept quiet and accepted such uncivilized provocations, and we have not provided cultural programs and have deprived our youth of healthy entertainment. The result is mosques being blown up, people being killed and the agents of hate enticing the young and pushing them to commit murderous acts.

Parents should take charge of their own children, communicate with them and guide them. Communities should join together to offer sports and recreation services in their neighborhood. The media must engage the youth and address their needs.

Above all the words of tolerance and acceptance should be key in our daily lives. And please let us stop blaming outsiders; enough is enough!!

<http://saudigazette.com.sa/saudi-arabia/stop-the-blame-game/>