



**United States Senate**  
**Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**  
Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

**Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman**  
**“The Roots of Violent Islamist Extremism”**  
**July 10, 2008**  
**AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY**

Good morning and welcome to the seventh in a series of hearings this Committee has held to examine the threat posed by violent Islamist extremism and the steps we must take to identify, isolate and ultimately eliminate this threat and the ideology that supports it.

On May 8, the Committee released a bipartisan staff report titled “Violent Islamist Extremism, the Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat.” That report concluded that the use of the Internet by Islamist terrorist organizations has increased the threat of homegrown terrorism in the United States. Just last month, a college student in Florida pled guilty to material support for terrorism. According to the plea agreement, the student admitted to producing a video that he uploaded to You Tube which demonstrated and explained in Arabic how a remote-controlled toy car could be disassembled and the components converted into a detonator for an explosive device. The student admitted that in producing the video he intended to help those who wanted to attack American servicemen and women. We are here today to learn more about the Islamist ideology that inspires people to take such hateful, violent and anti-American actions. “The 9-11 Commission Report” outlined the challenges we face. It said: “Our enemy is twofold: al Qaeda, a stateless network of terrorists that struck us on 9/11; and a radical ideological movement in the Islamic world, inspired in part by al Qaeda.”

Our first witness, Mr. Maajid Nawaz, will offer the Committee insights into that ideology and the role it played in driving him to become a member – at the age of 16 – and eventually a leader of the Islamist extremist organization Hizb ut-Tharir – or The Liberation Party – in the United Kingdom. Though Hizb ut-Tharir – called HT – claims that it is non-violent, the exposure of its members to a very extreme form of Islamist ideology has often laid the foundation for the planning and execution of terrorist acts. Mr. Nawaz recruited others, including his own family, to join Hizb ut-Tharir and was sent to Pakistan and Denmark to set up additional cells. He was later arrested in Egypt in 2002 for being a member of the organization and was imprisoned for four years.

Upon release, Mr. Nawaz returned to England where he eventually denounced the organization and Islamist ideology. Today, Mr. Nawaz is one of two directors of the Quilliam Foundation in the United Kingdom. The Foundation describes itself as a “counter extremism think tank” committed to discrediting the Islamist ideology that inspires Islamist terrorism around the world. Mr. Nawaz, it is my understanding that this is your first visit ever to the United States. I would like to extend my personal welcome and thank you for traveling here today to testify before our committee.

The other three witnesses on the first panel have extensive experience studying Islamist movements around the world – Dr. Peter Mandaville, Mrs. Zeyno Baran, and Dr. Fathali Moghaddam. We look forward to your testimony and your collective insight into Islamist ideology and the organizations that espouse that ideology. As the three of you know, we are particularly interested in how the ideology facilitates the radicalization process, the end point, of which, is the planning and execution of a terrorist attack. Our second panel today will have one witness – the director of the National Counter Terrorism Center, Mr. Michael Leiter. As the Committee initiated the legislation creating NCTC, we are proud to have its director here to testify. The 9/11 Commission’s report also tells us – quote: “our strategy must match our means to two ends: dismantling the al Qaeda network and prevailing in the longer term over the ideology that gives rise to Islamist terrorism.” I agree. The testimony of our witnesses today can help us in our efforts to better understand the roots of Islamist ideology so we can better direct our international, national and local efforts to counter its spread.