

PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed until 08:00 am 29th July, 2022

“DON’T FALL INTO THEIR TRAP....”

In 2013 Albert Berisha was trapped in Syria, his life under threat from the very Islamist terrorists he’d unwittingly fallen in with. How did a citizen of Pristina with no prior military training or connection to extremism get there?

Like many before him, Albert had been manipulated by extremist recruiters. Through a process of radicalization that was designed to deceive and manipulate, recruiters preyed on Albert’s concern for the suffering of the people of Syria and his instinct to want to help.

“They flattered me, they encouraged me. They saw my strengths and they used my weaknesses. But it was all a trap.”

Although he was able to escape, Albert would go to jail when he returned home. Even before his prosecution, Albert co-founded the **Institute for Security, Integration and Deradicalization (INSID)**. **Today INSID launched a new campaign** to support as many young people as possible in Kosovo who may be struggling with their lives and are potentially at risk of extremism or criminality.

INSID’s THINK campaign aims to build awareness of the threat posed by extremist recruitment and highlight the support that INSID and other organisations can provide to those people that feel they may need help.

INSID launched the International Engagement Group (IEG) in 2019. The IEG is a network of Civil Society Organizations who work in Europe and the Western Balkans to safeguard young people from extremist influence and support them to integrate into society and live fulfilled and positive lives.

The THINK campaign aims to reach those people who may be at-risk, and in need of support, by sharing the personal experiences of a number of individuals who have themselves been formerly radicalized and now want to tell their story so as to help others from the same difficult experiences.

The launch event, held at the Hotel Sirius in Pristina, was attended by Kosovan and international organizations who work to counter extremism. The event was attended by representatives from the Government of Kosovo as well as international NGOs and representatives from the United States Embassy in Kosovo.

INSID co-founder Albert Berisha said:

“Today marks an important day for INSID and all those in Kosovo and around the world who work to prevent our young people from falling into the trap of extremism. I know from my first-hand experience how easily young people can be manipulated and misled. The consequences are tragic for many people. I and the rest of the INSID team have committed ourselves to doing

THINK.



INSID

whatever we can to help young people think about whether someone is trying to radicalize them and offer our support to those people who would like our support.”

Note to Editors:

Albert Berisha: In 2013 Albert travelled to Syria to fight against the Assad regime. He fled Syria two weeks later after witnessing the brutal reality of terrorist group atrocities and in-fighting. In 2020 Albert Berisha was sentenced to three years and six months in prison, he was released in 2021.

About INSID: INSID is a leading interventions charity based in Pristina, Kosovo, that delivers youth-focused intervention support to those at risk of radicalization. Founded in 2016, INSID is made up of volunteers with direct experience of terrorist recruitment. The INSID team is committed to preventing others from falling into the trap offered by extremist groups and being recruited to become foreign fighters.

Web: www.Insid-kosovo.org