

## Moroccan Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism in Children's Literature

International observers frequently praise Morocco for its proactive and innovative CVE (countering violent extremism) program. While much attention has been paid to some institutions involved in the program, there has been virtually no analysis of an innovative institution known as the League of Moroccan Scholars (the "Rabita"). The Rabita has sought to send subtle messages discouraging citizens from joining jihadist movements through a range of media strategies including video games and children's books. This paper will analyze a three-part Arabic-language book series produced by the Rabita that seeks to discourage children from being susceptible to recruitment to jihadist organizations.

Starring two young Moroccan children, Nasir and Basma, the books portray jihadists as old, ridiculous, or inept, perhaps intending to protect children from frightening imagery or to make extremist organizations seem ridiculous. On religious matters, the evil characters are portrayed as members more of a cult than a religious organization, a depiction that fails to capture the sophistication of some jihadist groups religious and political critiques of their societies. By contrasting the realistic elements of the books' protagonists with the absurd presentation of jihadists, we argue that the books misrepresent jihadist organizations, undercutting their anti-terrorist message and leaving children, especially young men underprepared for the recruiting efforts of such organizations. At the intersection of children's literature and political science, this paper presents an interdisciplinary analysis of how one government's cultural production targets children in the fight against extremism.