

# Christian Arab Royal House Forms Partnership Leveraging Soccer to Combat Youth Radicalization in the Middle East

*The oldest Arab Royal lineage Joins ISAT to Use Soccer to prevent Youth Radicalization and recruitment in the Middle East*

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, December 3, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In the Middle East, where political instability and socio-economic challenges foster radicalization, soccer can be instrumental in steering youth away from extremist ideologies. Its universal nature brings people together, fostering community and positive identity.

For many young people in this region, soccer provides a sense of normalcy and joy amid chaos while also helping them develop vital life skills like teamwork and leadership.

Programs that combine soccer with educational and psychosocial support promote peace among youth. Interacting in a neutral setting helps participants break down stereotypes and build mutual respect.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) acknowledges the importance of sports in preventing violent extremism. These programs help youth find positive role models and a sense of



Some of the 600 children part of the ISAT in Syria



ISAT was founded and is directed by an evangelical Christian couple, Priscila from Brazil and Juan Marcos from Argentina

belonging while engaging them in constructive activities. Through soccer, young people learn conflict resolution and foster a sense of community that counters the isolation exploited by radical groups.

Since last year, [the Royal House of Ghassan](#), representing the Ghassanid Dynasty—the oldest active Arab royal lineage and the only Christian dynasty in the Middle East— also recognized as an international organization with Special Consultative Status by the United Nations, has established an official partnership with the [ISAT Football Academy](#) based in Damascus, Syria. This collaboration also includes the [Prinz Gharios Stiftung \(Prince Gharios Foundation\)](#), located in Düsseldorf, Germany.



HRH Prince Gharios El Chemor of Ghassan Al-Numan VIII, the head of the Royal House of Ghassan and Chairman of the Prinz Gharios Stiftung

The ISAT Football Academy is a sports entity specializing in professional football coaching programs accredited by FIFA, the International Federation of Association Football (Soccer's world governing body), and officially licensed by the Syrian Government and the Syrian Football Federation. Its founders are experts in Professional Football Coaching, Football Fitness, Nutrition, Academic Education and Social-Emotional Learning capacitation. Their Vision: To prepare, build, and coach athletes, children, and youth, boys, and girls, without discrimination of social condition or religious cred, who will represent their country, their cities, and communities through Professional Football (soccer) on and off the field.

Many of the children and youth that benefit from this project have a background of poverty, abuse, neglect, and marginalization. They are the ones usually targeted to be radicalized. If these kids are put on the right path, they can become professional players or coaches instead of radicals.

When exploring this partnership, Prince Gharios stated, "I always like to remember that the problem is not just the people that resort to violence but all the radicalized people. Even the ones that don't take an active role in violence will enable a radical society in the future unless we can give them a future, a future with dignity."

ISAT was founded and is directed by an evangelical Christian couple, Priscila from Brazil and Juan Marcos from Argentina; hence, the ISAT's logo has both the flags of Brazil and Argentina.

The project “ISAT—Football Academy” started in 2002 in India and has worked in five different places in four countries: New Delhi, India; Kashmir, India; Kabul, Afghanistan; Istanbul, Turkey; and Damascus, Syria. It cooperates with other sports entities in Brazil, Argentina, and Spain.

ISAT opened eight different Football Centers in Kashmir with approximately 3000 players. Hundreds of players turned from violent movement activists into professional players and young coaches.

Currently, the ISAT operates two centers, one in Damascus and one in As Sweida, and is responsible for 600 (six hundred) children in Syria.

Priscilla Pedroso, the dedicated Director of the Education and Neurocognitive Department at the Academy, brings 30 years of invaluable experience in education. The academy goes beyond teaching and promoting soccer; it embraces a holistic approach that offers vital psychological support to players and instructors and extends to the entire community. This commitment to nurturing children empowers them to thrive, focusing on their protection and addressing their diverse concerns to pave the way for success in every aspect of life. The Child Safety Protection Policy stands as a cornerstone of the ISAT's mission, equipping coaches and staff to recognize, report, and refuse any inappropriate behavior. Building on this foundation, the Social and Emotional Learning Program is designed to transform schools into vibrant, supportive environments. This initiative champions psychological support, conflict resolution, emotional awareness, management, empathy, and bullying prevention, creating a future where every child can flourish.

The ultimate goal of this partnership for the Royal House of Ghassan is to find more support for this initiative, to strengthen and augment the ISAT Football Academy's activities in Syria, and to expand it to other Middle Eastern countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, Morocco, etc. The Royal House sees the work and programs of ISAT not only as a magnificent educational tool for children and adolescents but also as a preventive measure for the radicalization of youngsters by extremist organizations.

Incorporating soccer into youth programs in the Middle East offers a promising strategy to prevent radicalization. By providing a safe and supportive environment, soccer can help young people build resilience, foster community ties, and develop a positive identity. As these programs continue to grow, they hold the potential to transform lives and contribute to a more peaceful and stable region.

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