

# Institute for Counter- Terrorism Interns in the Fight against Terror



**DR. BOAZ GANOR, ASSOCIATE DEAN OF THE LAUDER  
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT, DIPLOMACY AND  
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RESEARCH IN THE COUNTER-TERRORISM FIELD.”**



*Interns welcoming guests at The World Summit on Counter-Terrorism: ICT's International Conference.*

**W**hat do a former professional volleyball player, a doctor of mechanical engineering and a young graduate with a degree in International Politics have in common?

Believe it or not, each is currently serving as an intern at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at IDC Herzliya.

According to Stevie Weinberg, researcher and internship coordinator, ICT internships provide a crucial link between the academic environment and practical, hands-on learning, and enable participants to develop their professional skills, expand their personal networks, and build valuable work experience – not to mention their confidence in dealing with real-world issues.

Founded in 1996 by Mr. **Shabtai Shavit**, former director of the Mossad and chairman of the Board at ICT, Prof. **Uriel Reichman**, founder and president of IDC Herzliya, and Dr. **Boaz Ganor**, associate dean of the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy and executive director of ICT, ICT is one of the world's leading academic institutes for counter-terrorism. One of the first institutes of its kind, ICT facilitates international cooperation against the struggle to fight global terrorism and is an independent think tank that provides expertise in terrorism, counter-terrorism, homeland security, threat vulnerability and risk assessment, intelligence analysis and national security and defense policy.

Anyone interested in the field of counter-terrorism who wants to pull up their sleeves and get involved, will be hard put finding a better option than the ICT internship. Specifically, Dr. Ganor says, "IDC students who are interested in counter-terrorism studies, both at the BA and MA levels, have a unique opportunity – to get hands-on experience at ICT during their studies. The prestige of ICT as one of the leading international policy research institutes in the world in counter-terrorism is bringing high demands for internship programs not just from IDC students but

from students of other Israeli universities and from leading universities all over the world."

Adds Ganor, "Becoming an ICT intern exposes students who are interested in developing their careers in this field to ICT experts - researchers, fellows and staff - and offers them the opportunity to mingle with world-renowned policy-makers, security practitioners and scholars, on top of a first-hand experience in research in the counter-terrorism field"

According to Weinberg, ICT interns quickly find themselves at the heart of the institute's activities: "Each of our interns contributes to the daily research, activities and events of the institute, and all under the supervision of a senior researcher or staff member. Our interns do not make coffee or photocopies!" he tells me, as we sit in the ICT lounge on the top floor of the Arison-Lauder building on IDC's campus. Around the corner, computers are buzzing and keyboards are clacking, as the new cadre of interns delves deeper and deeper into the world of international terrorism. "It's research, research, research," Says Weinberg.

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IDC Herzliya students listening during a guest-lecture hosted by the Institute for Counter-Terrorism.

**“I got the chance to be in a very vivid and stimulating environment. I was invited to conferences and the material ICT provided me with, and the knowledge that I got out of my work, helped me a great deal in my academic process.” -- Michele Groppi, MA student at IDC and former ICT intern**

One of the perks of internship is being invited, along with IDC graduate students and ICT staff, to attend the many seminars taking place with leading academics, practitioners and decision makers. The last years' lineups have included notable speakers such as MK **Avi Dichter**, former minister of Public Security and former director of the Shin Bet; Mr. **Michael Chertoff**, former United States secretary for Homeland Security; Prof. **Rohan Gunaratna**, director of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Singapore; Prof. **Gabriela Shalev**, former Israeli ambassador to the UN; Prof. **Erroll Southers**, former presidential nominee for assistant secretary of the TSA; Prof. **James Sebenius**, director of the Harvard Negotiation Project; Prof. **Stephen D. Krasner**, dean of Social Sciences, Stanford University; Prof. **Bill Banks**, director of the Institute for National Security and Counter-terrorism; and H.E. **James Steinberg**, deputy secretary of State, United States.

According to Weinberg, who was born in Belgium and earned both his first and second degrees at IDC's Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy, with his master's degree in counter-terrorism, interns are handpicked from the large pool of applications, according to their resumes, academic transcripts, writing samples and cover letters. Interns are welcome to post commentaries and articles about current events related to terrorism and counter-terrorism on the ICT website, and they are assigned to a multitude of projects, such as the World Summit on Counter-Terrorism - ICT's annual conference, the Jihadi Websites Monitoring Group, the ICT Terrorist Incidents and Profiles Database, the Islamist Radicalization Index, De-radicalization Processes, Jihadi Arenas and Terrorist Networks, and Terrorist Rationality and Decision-Making.

The growing renown of the internship program has brought interested applicants from around the globe, with current interns hailing from the United States, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, South

Africa and Latvia. Many have graduated from some of the world's finest institutions, including Stanford, Oxford, Harvard and National Defense University, and their backgrounds are by no means limited to Political Science. The reason for this, according to Weinberg, is that “terrorism itself is a multidisciplinary field - everything is related to terrorism: political sciences, sociology, psychology, computer sciences, biology, chemistry, etc. – so our program is diverse not only internationally, but in the disciplinary backgrounds from which the interns come. This helps us in a great way, in that we are able to match the interns with projects to which they are eminently suited. For example, we have one section of ongoing research in which we are trying to build trends and analyze the Islamic radicalization process around the world. So when someone comes from Italy, who knows the language and how to look in Italian resources to identify socioeconomic issues, religious issues, etc., it helps us to build trends.”

On the day of my visit to ICT, three interns took time out to speak with me about their backgrounds and the exciting work in which they are currently involved. Please meet...

#### **Michele Groppi, Modena, Italy**

Michele Groppi earned his bachelor's degree in International Relations at Stanford University, before returning to his native Italy for two years to play professional volleyball. Now beginning his master's degree in Counter-Terrorism and Homeland Security at IDC, Groppi spent the summer of 2011 working as an ICT intern and writing a paper about Muslim Radicalization in the West.

“It was an extraordinary experience,” Groppi tells me, after folding his 6’4” frame into one of the low-lying lounge chairs. “I was so glad I did it and would totally recommend it to anyone interested in improving his or her

knowledge about the topic, and about everything going in Israel. Aside from the research, I got the chance to be in a very vivid and stimulating environment. I was invited to conferences and the material ICT provided me with, and the knowledge that I got out of my work, helped me a great deal in my academic process. In addition, the people were very nice - it's a relaxed environment, and I was given space to manage my time, without any restrictions. And no matter what, I could always go talk to Dr. Boaz Ganor, the ICT director, and any of the very distinguished faculty they have here. If someone wants to enhance their experience, this is definitely one of the best places around."

The story of Groppi's arrival at ICT is somewhat romantic - as a student in Stanford's honors program, one of Groppi's professors was none other than ICT's director, Dr. Boaz Ganor. The two kept in touch, and Groppi invited Ganor to his final thesis presentation - known as the 'thesis defense'. "Since the beginning I knew I had met one of the most important academic



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**Stevie Weinberg, researcher and internship coordinator, ICT**  
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figures of my life, and for that I am immensely grateful. Thus, when Prof. Ganor told me he had an internship for me, I didn't think about it twice, I was here two weeks later."

It wasn't long before Groppi decided to apply for his master's degree at IDC, which he began this past fall. "This is without a doubt the best place in the world to do counter-terrorism."

In attacking his intern project, which was the Italy section of the ICT "Islamist Radicalization Index," Groppi began by focusing on the demographics of the Islamic community in Italy, and then studied its radicalization process. "I looked at how many Muslims there are, what they do and where they are from, then linked it to radicalization in general and radicalization in Italy, and then created an index of radicalization. I listed all organizations and individuals we consider radical, even those who are not necessarily engaged in violence, and then everything from businesses engaged in fundraising, proselytism, preaching of radical Islam, recruiting of Jihad members, plotting of attacks on the Italian soil and abroad, and so on. I concluded by listing all attempts and attacks,

accusations and arrests, people expelled from the country and finally, all religiously-driven murders within the Muslim community."

Asked what impact he hopes his work will have, Groppi's answer is simple: "Hopefully it will be enough to make many Europeans realize that Islamic radicalization is a real problem and we have to deal with it. There are many indicators that if we don't do anything, there will be an increasing problem for Italy, for Europe and for Israel."

### Tatiana Chelli, Paris, France

Newly arrived in Israel, Tatiana Chelli completed her bachelor's degree in International Politics in England and decided to gain some work experience before going on to do her master's degree. "I had visited Israel in the past, in fact I did a year-long internship with a consultant who was

a faculty member at IDC, and I also had some friends who did internships at ICT. It sounded very interesting, to do research in counter-terrorism, so I sent in my CV and was accepted."

Chelli was also assigned to work on the "Islamist Radicalization Index," with her focus on radicalization in France. She spends her days researching online and in books, gathering as much information as she can. "I read French newspapers to scan for events, focusing mainly on current news but sometimes going back as far as two years. I look for radical incidents, as well as the way the government responds to them, and the different policies that exist in France to fight radicalization."

Many of Chelli's findings are disturbing, though they don't come as a complete surprise, since although she has lived abroad for the past few years, "I go back enough to feel close to France, and I talk with my family and friends who are still there, and I realize how extreme it can be. Still, it's a shock to see it in writing and to see how it affects people's lives. I was also very surprised to discover that in France, one cannot say words like 'radicalization' or 'Islam' - and there's a law against creating statistics that involve religions and ethnicities - it's considered politically incorrect! So any numbers used in France are theoretical only."

Following her internship, Chelli intends to apply for a master's degree program in International Affairs and Security. Meanwhile, she is getting the most out of her internship, loving the atmosphere at ICT and "how, while the interns are working on different projects, we all discuss them together. It's very easy to feel comfortable here."

### Antonella Accettura, Rome, Italy

As a doctor of mechanical engineering, Antonella Accettura is no stereotypical intern. When asked how she became interested in terrorism, though, she doesn't miss a beat before answering, with a mischievous smile, "Why the best terrorists are engineers! Actually, though, I became





*Interns running an information stand at The World Summit on Counter-Terrorism: ICT's International Conference.*

interested by chance. My father is an officer in the Italian army, and two years ago one of his best friends asked me to attend a conference on Homeland Security. I didn't want to go, but he insisted, and that was it – I fell in love with Homeland Security, and looked for something that would enable me to apply my engineering skills to this field. I began to study for my master's degree in Crisis Management, and then came to IDC that summer for the Executive Certificate in Counter-terrorism Studies at ICT. Then one month after the course finished, I came back to begin my internship here. I feel so comfortable, so at home, the staff here is warm and welcoming to us, it's one of the best places where I could do it."

Accettura's project is to study terrorism in Nigeria, using, among others, Italian sources. "I began studying what newspapers had to say on this topic," she tells me, her face lighting up, "and in the beginning I found a lot of walls and obstacles. But then I discovered that I could use the many Catholic sources available – missionaries working in Nigeria - who are the best, most outspoken journalists we have. So I was focusing on investigative journalists, but as I searched the internet, these missionaries and their blogs kept showing up and I found that they were outspoken against the Italian government and the Vatican, and were not asking for anything – they just wanted to speak the truth. So today, I am working on traffic and routes of illegal arms, human beings, hi-tech and drugs, and there is an American intern working on the same topic, and we compare sources and share our information."

So far, Accettura's research has turned up a strong connection between Nigeria and Italy – "more than I had any idea," she tells me. "The stories appearing are connected to the main terrorist groups. In northern Nigeria, there are Muslim terrorists attacking Christians in a merciless way, and in the south, which is characterized by environmental terrorism, there are terrorists fighting against the environmental exploitation that is brought by some of the world's largest oil companies."

Following her internship, Accettura plans to return to Italy to complete her master's thesis for a dual master's degree in European Policies and Crisis Management that she will receive from two universities - La Sapienza University in Rome and the University of Belgrade, in Serbia, where she has spent time studying Human Rights. ★

- Joy Pincus

## James Steinberg, United States Deputy Secretary of State, Visits IDC Herzliya

Last Spring, prior to President Obama's speech on the Middle East, HE James Steinberg, United States Deputy Secretary of State, met with graduate students of the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at IDC, as part of the Herzliya Forum for Diplomacy. Steinberg shared the experience of his political career under three presidents, Carter, Clinton and Obama, and spoke about the importance of the recent changes unfolding in the Middle East. He addressed the difficulty of predicting events such as those enveloping the Middle East, adding that predicting them is not the main issue. The challenge, he stressed, is to understand what can be done and how to aid the process and the formation of change, to join with new partners and attempt to encourage the new regimes to continue reforms. On the one hand, these are times of change, and on the other, times of great uncertainty, but the opportunity for change must determine the manner in which these new regional elements are approached. According to Steinberg, most of the demonstrations occurring in the Arab World call for change. They do not cry out against the US or Israel and the movements must therefore be encouraged. As human beings, he said, we must encourage such changes. In the long run, the more we encourage progress in these places, the more they will be comfortable with receiving Western support.



*Anne Walter, Public Affairs Office, U.S. Embassy in Israel; Jonathan Davis, vice president for External Relations, IDC; Dr. Boaz Ganor, founder and executive director, International Institute for Counter-Terrorism and deputy dean, Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy & Strategy, IDC; H.E. James Steinberg, deputy secretary of State, United States; Prof. Uriel Reichman, founder and president, IDC; Robert Silverman, political counselor, United States; Prof. Rafi Melnick, provost, IDC.*