



OPINION

One Man's Triumph Against Terrorists

By Rabbi Abraham Cooper

Published July 11, 2011 | FoxNews.com

Checking into the hotel in Dublin, Ireland for Google's Summit Against Violent Extremism, I noticed an extraordinary number of security personnel. It wasn't clear if they were deployed to protect the 200 invitees from around the world, or to reassure the locals.

Along with an array of human rights activists, the organizers invited a who's who of (thankfully) former violent extremists. There were violent gangbangers from California, ex-Neo Nazis and White Supremacists from America's heartland, FARC terrorists from Colombia, former Islamist rabble-rousers from the United Kingdom and even Mujahedeen operatives from Pakistan.

I made my way over to the delegation from Indonesia that included an ex-terrorist whose brother was the lead suicide bomber in the horrific 2002 Bali nightclub attack that killed 202 innocent victims.

That's when I saw my old friend, Febby.

There are two features about him that are unforgettable: The sight of a young man -- horribly maimed and burned and an irrepressible smile.

I first met Febby at a hotel in Jakarta in 2007. Sitting alongside his mother, the rotund, 20-something businessman tearfully described the moment his life was nearly taken from him. In 2003, while attending a business lunch at the Marriott Hotel, suicide bombers struck. The ensuing fireball and explosions severely maimed and burned him. He had to endure months of isolation wards, painful skin grafts and rehabilitation.

Throughout the ordeal, Febby had to grapple with his worst fear: did his fiancé still love him? Was it too much to expect her to still marry a man who was now scarred for life? And even if they did eventually marry -- could they manage to still have children?

Febby would expand on his struggles a few months later at a multi-faith conference in Bali co-sponsored by the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance and the LibForAll Foundation.

An audience of Indonesian political leaders, Muslim and Hindu teachers, and religious figures representing five religions quietly wept, as Febby, along with Hindu, Muslim and Jewish

survivors of suicide bombings in Indonesia and Israel shared their desperate struggles to reclaim lives stolen by terrorists who justified their crimes in the name of God.



It was Febby's story, and those of thousands of other forgotten victims of terror that led the Simon Wiesenthal Center to urge the international community to declare any suicide bombing, a crime against humanity.

We brought our campaign to world capitals from Beijing to Ankara, from Vatican City, to the halls of the U.N. and our State Department. Our plea was simple. It is time to empower the all-too-often forgotten victims of terror and their families to use the Rule of Law to go after the food chain of non-state terrorism; to bring those who promote, sponsor and train terrorists before the bar of justice.

To date, we haven't been very successful convincing the powers that be to take action, even though the scale of destruction from suicide bombers escalates and the percentage of targeted innocents are increasingly Muslim.

Back in Dublin, I rushed past the former hate mongers and terrorists to give Febby a big hug. Recognizing the rabbi from America he responded with his signature smile; its bright optimism almost succeeding in blotting out the seared skin and maimed hands.

When I finally asked him about his life, he flashed another smile and said, "I am a happily married man and we are truly blessed with two children – a girl and a boy."

Memo to Google and the vanguard of 'civil society': never mind the human rights 'experts' – let the light of Febby's smile lead the way to a better tomorrow!

Rabbi Abraham Cooper is associate Dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2011/07/11/one-mans-triumph-against-terrorism/>