



How Islamic religious services can contribute to preventing and countering religious radicalisation in prisons: the Dutch model and case studies



**Co-funded by the Justice Programme of the
European Union 2014-2020**



Some starting points /statements

- Islamic chaplaincy / religious counselling is primarily a care, aid and humanitarian assistance (like psychology, medical care and so on). It is a profession.
- Islamic chaplaincy is to assist detainees in giving concrete expression to their right to practice belief as stated in many conventions
- Preventing radicalisation should be seen as a by-catch, not as the main objective or target of IC. Instrumentalisation or 'securitarisation' of IC is less effective (at least for the long term).
- IC is part of the juridical system (prison service) and at the same time independent from it.
- The care consists of a coherent number of services and base on daily and close contact to the detainees.



Services IC

- Religious meetings (Friday prayer and sermon, other prayers in community)
- Individual (confidential) conversations
- Group conversations
- Special meetings and religious celebrations
- Interventions in crisis situations
- Presence (just to walk, small talks, saying salaam and how are you doing and so forth...)
- Counseling
- Mediation



Conditions posed by the Dutch State to institutionalise the Islamic Chaplaincy

in order to keep the status of official, to be equal to the established chaplains:

1. Recognition of a representative Muslim Organization which can take the responsibility for the theological suitability of the chaplains.
2. The appointment of a head of the Islamic Chaplaincy (nominated by the Muslim organization and delegated to act on behalf of the Muslim community).
3. The realisation of an Islamic academic theology course in order to make Muslim chaplains able to improve their education at academic level.



History of the Islamic Chaplaincy before 2008

- Until January 2008 Islamic Chaplains were not officials like their Christian, Jewish, and Humanist colleagues;
- First Muslim Chaplains were appointed as freelancers for just a very limited of hours a week;
- Freelance Muslim chaplains were appointed by the prison director. The established Chaplaincy (Catholic of Protestant) were responsible for t recruiting and screening the chaplains;
- Since 2004 the recruiting and screening of Muslim chaplains was done by the National Agency of Correctional institution, since 2006 by the director of the national agency of Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care Service (established in 2006)



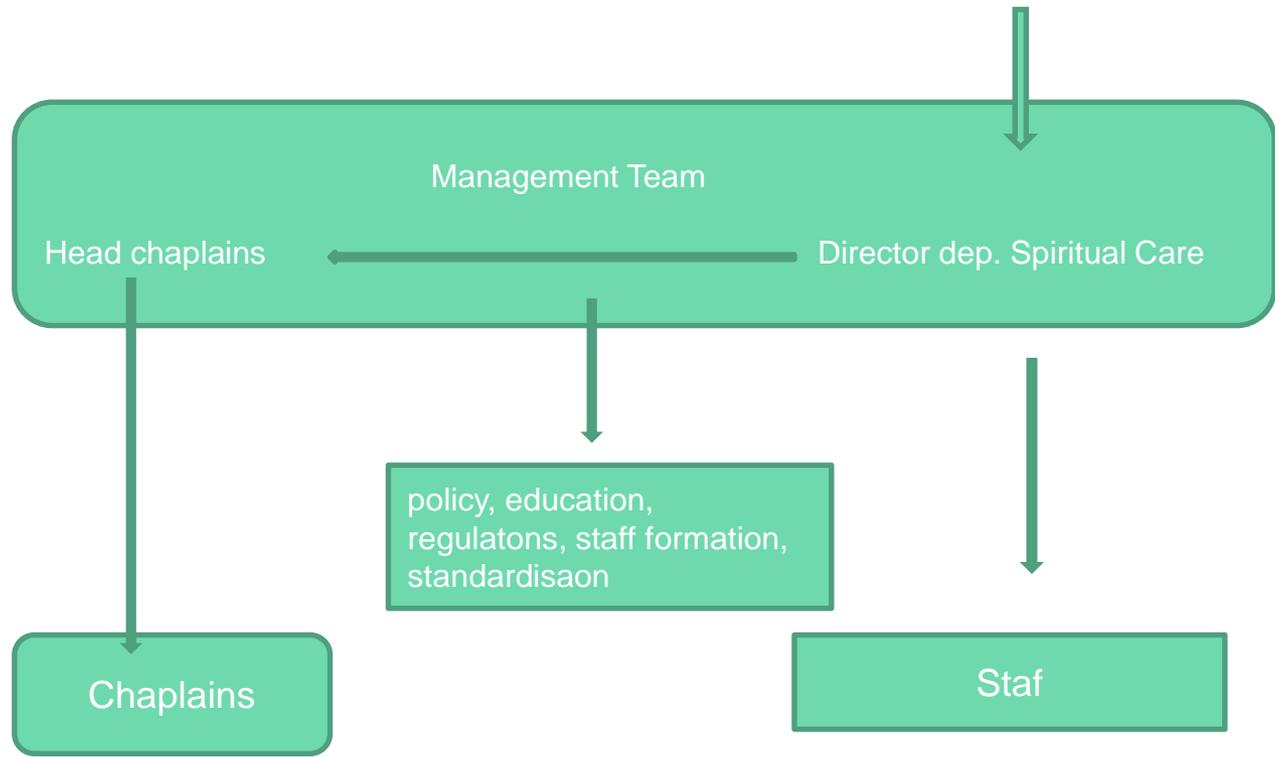
Process of institutionalising IC

- On October 2007 the State recognized the CMO as the Sending Organization. A head of Islamic Chaplaincy was at the same time appointed.
- In 2005 the Vu University Amsterdam started the first Master Islamic spiritual care.
- Between October 2007 and January 2008:
 - The head formulated in cooperation with the the department of Spiritual Care and the Muslims Endorsing Organization the criteria of suitable Muslim Chaplains.
 - The criteria concerns the basic element of the 'Islamic clergy' (suitable imam for the context of public area) on the one hand and the fulfilling of an official on the other hand.
 - All chaplains had been tested on these criteria. new selection and screening had taken place.

Structure

**Denominational
sending organisations**

Ministry of Justice





Prison imams, The Netherlands



Swear ceremony









... Some prisoners actually become more serious about their religion precisely because they object to perceived slights against its value or integrity

James Beckford and Sophie Gilliat, *Religion in prison. Equal rites in a multi-faith societ.*, 1998, p. 8-9.



Main foundations of chaplaincy /Spiritual care in the public domain

Article 18, paragraph 1, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

‘Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching’.



Article 9 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms uses almost the same phrasing in paragraphs 1 and 2:

'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance;

Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others'.



Causal Connection between Detention and Radicalisation

A. What factors may contribute to the religious radicalisation of Muslim detainees?

B. What is the role of *prison imams* in preventing and countering it?



Some factors which may contribute to the religious radicalisation of Muslim detainees and how Islamic chaplaincy dealt with it

- 1. Influence by prison imams who are themselves radical, who consciously or unconsciously spread radical thoughts.**
- 2. A lack of religious supervision of the detainees.**
- 3. Recruitment by other detainees.**
- 4. Religious reading material.**
- 5. Influence of external networks and communities.**