

Title of presentation as announced in Program Book: “*The Dark Side of the Web: Terror on the Internet,*” by Gabriel Weimann.

Gabriel Weimann is a Full Professor of Communication at the Department of Communication at Haifa University, Israel. His research interests include the study of media effects, political campaigns, persuasion and influence, media and public opinion, modern terrorism and the mass media. He published six books: *Communicating Unreality* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2000); *The Influentials: People Who Influence People* (State University of New York Press, 1995); *The Theater of Terror* (New York: Longman, 1994); *Hate on Trial* (Toronto: Mosaic, 1986); and *The Singaporean Enigma* (Jerusalem: Tzivonim, 2001) and *Terror On the Internet* (Washington, DC: USIP Press). His papers and research reports, more than 130 publications, have been published in scientific journals such as *Journal of Communication*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Communication Research*, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *American Sociological Review* and others. He received numerous grants and awards from international foundations, including the Fulbright Foundation, the Canadian-Israel Foundation, and the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung, the German National Research Foundation (D.F.G.), the Sasakawa Foundation, United States Institute for Peace (USIP) and others. Prof. Weimann was a Visiting Professor at various universities including University of Pennsylvania, Stanford University, Hofstra University, Lehigh University (USA), University of Mainz (Germany), Carleton University (Canada) and the National University of Singapore. Professor Weimann spent a year as a Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Washington, DC, working on his research project on terrorism and the Internet. This project yielded a book, *Terror in the Internet: The New Arena, the New Challenges*, which was published in Washington, DC (2006). He is currently a Distinguished Visiting Professor at SIS (School of International Service), the American University, Washington.

Description:

How terrorists use the Internet to carry out their deadly plans on a daily basis and threats posed to our civil liberties by government efforts to constrain cyber terror.

Terrorists fight their wars in cyberspace as well as on the ground. However, while politicians and the media have hotly debated the dangers that cyberterrorism poses to the Internet, surprisingly little is known about the threat posed by terrorists’ use of the Internet. Today, as this report makes plain, terrorist organizations and their supporters maintain thousands of websites, exploiting the unregulated, anonymous, and easily accessible nature of the Internet to target an array of messages to a variety of audiences. Our study identifies no fewer than eight different ways in which terrorists are using the Internet to advance their cause, ranging from psychological warfare to recruitment, networking to fundraising. In each case, the report not only analyzes how the Internet can facilitate terrorist operations but also illustrates the point with examples culled from an extensive exploration of the World Wide Web. Today, all active terrorist groups have established their presence on the Internet. Terrorism on the Internet is a very dynamic phenomenon: websites suddenly emerge, frequently modify their formats, and then swiftly disappear—or, in many cases, seem to disappear by changing their online address but retaining much the same content. Using these websites, online terrorists target three different audiences: current and potential supporters; international public opinion; and

enemy publics. Finally, while we must better defend our societies against cyberterrorism and Internet-savvy terrorists, we should also consider the costs of applying counterterrorism measures to the Internet. Such measures can hand authoritarian governments and agencies with little public accountability tools with which to violate privacy, curtail the free flow of information, and restrict freedom of expression, thus adding a heavy price in terms of diminished civil liberties to the high toll exacted by terrorism itself.