



# UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON VICTIMS OF TERRORISM

8-9 OCTOBER, 2024 • VITORIA-GASTEIZ, SPAIN



## Press Release

### United Nations International Conference on Victims of Terrorism in Spain gives a message of global solidarity and calls for greater support for victims worldwide

**Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain), 8 October 2024** - The United Nations International Conference on Victims of Terrorism, co-organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Kingdom of Spain, on 8 and 9 October 2024, started today at the Palacio de Congresos Europa in Vitoria-Gasteiz.

The Conference aims to express solidarity with all victims of terrorism around the world and review progress on the international victims of terrorism agenda, as a direct outcome of the United Nations Global Congress of Victims of Terrorism held in New York in 2022.

Held under the theme “Education as a Tool for Prevention, Peacebuilding and Empowerment of Victims of Terrorism,” the International Conference is gathering over 400 participants, including 66 Member States, 59 victims of terrorism and victims' associations and numerous UN representatives to discuss the role of victims and survivors of terrorism as educators, peacebuilders and agents for change.

In a Call to Action addressing the high-level opening of the UN International Conference on Victims of Terrorism in Spain, victims of terrorism expressed their solidarity with victims worldwide. Remarking that victims “are united in our pain and united in our humanity”, they reminded participants that “even in the darkest of times, we can continue to strive for a brighter future, together”.

They called for greater support for victims of terrorism, emphasizing the importance of education “not as an option, but as a right”, especially in a context where disinformation and a lack of opportunities can fuel violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The importance of including victims’ voices in policies and strategies to prevent and counter terrorism was emphasized, along with a powerful reminder to Member States and organizations present that “supporting victims is an integral part of building peace”.

Their call was echoed by the **His Majesty King Felipe VI of Spain**, who thanked them for their powerful and moving testimonies. “Through your pain and grief – which, we all ought to share – you embody true bravery and dignity,” he stated. The United Nations’ **Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov**, expressed his hope that the conference will “stimulate a vision for a strengthened, responsive, and fit-for-purpose victims of terrorism agenda.” “We must all rise to the occasion. We owe it to victims and survivors of terrorism to provide the support they need to heal and rebuild their lives,” he said.

The opening was also attended by the co-chairs of the intergovernmental Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism, Iraq and Spain, who were represented at the opening by **H.E Mr. José Manuel Albares Bueno, Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs**, **H.E. Mr. Fernando Grande-Marlaska Gómez, Spanish Minister of the Interior** and **H.E. Mr. Salih Husain Ali, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary**

**of the Republic of Iraq to Spain speaking on behalf of H.E. Mr. Fuad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Republic of Iraq.**

**Maidier Etxebarria, Mayor of Vitoria-Gasteiz**, the city hosting the conference, gave an address welcoming the opportunity “to reflect together, to remember the things that have always united us, and to underscore the right of victims to the truth, to dignity, and to justice”. Other participants including Ministers and government officials and heads of United Nations agencies reiterated the commitment to supporting the rights and needs of victims of terrorism.

The two-day discussions will cover ways in which the international community, member states, victims’ associations, and victims and survivors can help to educate and sensitize new generations about the impact of terrorism, contributing to fostering empathy and solidarity with victims and nurturing a culture of peace and resilience. Additionally, the conference explores how Member States and civil society organizations can best support the needs and uphold the rights of victims of terrorism and promote inclusivity, tolerance, and social cohesion in communities affected by terrorism.

## **Background**

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in the Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT/UNCCT) leads the implementation of the Global Victims of Terrorism Support Programme (‘VoT Programme’). The VoT Programme was launched in 2018 to stand in solidarity with victims of terrorism, strengthen victims’ voices and their role in preventing and countering violent extremism, establish stronger mechanisms to provide practical resources to victims and survivors, and strengthen the capacity of Member States and civil society organizations to assist and support victims of terrorism in protecting and promoting their rights and needs.

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