



Virtual Dialogue with Human Rights and Civil Society Partners on Building a Better Paradigm to Prevent and Counter Terrorism

Remarks by

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are talking today because we share a common goal. We do not want terrorists to attack people and undermine our institutions, values and societies. We want people to be able to live their lives without fear and not to become victims of terrorism and extremism. We want people to pursue happiness, realize their potential and exercise their freedoms.

The counter-terrorism architecture should not only prevent terrorists from attacking people. It should also protect individuals, communities, victims, women, and civil society.

If this is what we should achieve then I would like to propose the following:

First, we need to focus on evidence not rhetoric.

For 20 years security policies have led to a paradigm of threat prevention and pre-emptive criminal action. Policies are developed without first understanding the actual nature of the threat. The impulse to act is so strong that often the focus is on taking any action rather than the best action, with too little consideration of the consequential damages this may cause to human rights. This approach is counter-productive.

Take counter-terrorism financing efforts. 6 weeks after 9/11 the global community adopted the rhetoric that civil society was particularly vulnerable to terrorist financing. After 10 years an official global study showed they were not, and we now have a risk-based approach. But the damage of that rhetoric on the human rights and civil society still remains.





Of course, something needs to be done.

As we see emerging threats from the pandemic or new technologies let's have those best practices from the beginning. Let's gather the evidence, understand the landscape, and thereby design effective policies and measures from the outset, rather than course-correcting years down the line.

We need to move from assumptions to evidence of threat.

Second, the UN as a system exists to promote peace, security, development and human rights. So the UN counter-terrorism architecture cannot be siloed from that. If we are to ensure evidence-based human rights compliant system, we need 3 structural changes:

- **We need to relink security with the broader UN goals.** Counter-terrorism policies have to be designed and implemented together with agencies working on justice, development, humanitarian, peace, women, and aid. We need to guarantee that the security policy is informed by their expertise and that there is coherence between parallel agendas. For better human security results counterterrorism should be part of the conversation but should not be leading it. Our vision must be broad, not narrow.
- **We need to mainstream HR and gender in all of the counter-terrorism work from the beginning.** This means that human rights must be integrated in the counter-terrorism objectives. They cannot be an appendage, nor an after-thought. We can achieve that by integrating monitoring, evaluation, gender and human rights impact assessments in any counter-terrorism or prevention of violent extremism projects or initiatives.
- **We need to create an independent and adequately funded oversight mechanism** that will investigate how the counter-terrorism architecture operates, reveal its impact on human rights, rule of law and other UN goals, and call for an accountability.

We need all 3 -the relinking the mainstreaming and the oversight to co-exist. In that way - from design, through implementation to assessment we will rely on actual evidence and clear criteria on the effectiveness of the systems and its impact on human rights.

And that brings me to my final point - As we all know, one of the human rights recognized by the UN is the right to participation. To be meaningful **participation should be open to all those who want to be part of it, not just to select few who are invited.**





Let's open up to civil society from the beginning. We in civil society can help find and analyse the evidence, and we are the experts on the implementation of human rights and other issues that are at the core of the UN.

Over the last 20 years I have seen an enormous richness of experience at the local level, in everything from peace building, women, victims to preventing extremism and protecting human rights. We brought that experience from over 80 countries to the Financial Action Task Force to reformat recommendation 8, and together we work with FATF to improve implementation to this day. If it works with the FATF, it can work with the UN security and CT agencies.

And the global and national civil society is already at work.

For the last three years it has been building expertise and collecting evidence of how counter-terrorism policies are not used to attack terrorists, but to attack individuals, groups and civil society. Give us the opportunity to bring this national expertise and experience to the UN.

So - protect our civic spaces. Create formal mechanisms to bring us to the table when policies are discussed and drafted. Then all our energies can be focussed on helping to get counter-terrorism right from the outset, rather than defending civic spaces later on.

To summarise:

1. Replace the 'prevention of undefined threats' with evidence-based counter-terrorism approaches
2. Better integrate UN counterterrorism work in the UN's broader mission and goals
3. Make human rights and gender an objective of the effort and introduce an oversight.

And all of these must be achieved through a broad participatory and inclusive approach – which enables and protects civic spaces. Only when the UN security agenda is implemented in concert with the peace, human rights, development agendas we will make people's lives better and safe.

Thank you.

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