



Second United Nations
**HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE
ON COUNTER-TERRORISM**

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Second United Nations High-Level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States

SESSION IV: Parallel breakout discussions: Responding to new and evolving counter-terrorism challenges in the new decade, Breakout session C: Protecting, repatriating, rehabilitating and reintegrating women and children with links to United Nations listed terrorist groups

29 June 2021, 3 – 4:30 p.m.

Thank you, Mr Gregorian.

Dear excellencies,

The Bulan Institute has been closely observing the experiences of Central Asian states to repatriate and rehabilitate women and children from Syria and Iraq since 2019. Last week, the Bulan Institute published a big report that analyzes the experiences of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan that gives unique details of rehabilitation and reintegration in these countries. Today I would like to urge all countries to follow the examples of Central Asian countries and start repatriation of children with their mothers. Children are innocent and we need to give them a chance to live in peace in their home countries. Currently, about 70, 000 people are being held in Al-Hol and Roj camps. An estimated 45,000 of those people are children, mainly from Syria and Iraq, and 8,000 are children with claims to foreign nationality. These children, like all other children affected by conflict, have the right to humanitarian assistance. Those born to foreign nationals have the right to be safeguarded, including with legal documentation, family reunification and repatriation to their home countries.

2021 COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

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Based on our recent research, a few words about repatriated children in Central Asia. Rehabilitation, reintegration and re-socialization of children are very specific processes. There are challenges which are threefold: 1. There should be non-stop, systematic psychological work to heal post-conflict trauma of children. 2. Re-socialization of children to adapt them to new life and to adapt to school education is a big challenge. All children returned from Syria were deprived of education, they were taught to read Koran and ISIS ideology. So after addressing urgent health and psychological problem: the next main task was to adapt to school education. There were cases when some parents and a child did not want to go to school. So due to the religious dogmas, some parents were against civic education. there was a case when 14 years girl refused to go to school, because she was taught that her mission is to marry and education is not for her. In such cases, there is long lasting work to explain, raise awareness. 3. The third very important work is theological and ideological, to explain that Islam is peaceful religion, and the world does not consist at all of believers and non-believers. Many children return with black and white mindset, In religious part, all three countries faced challenges since they had no theologians who had experience of working with children.

I would like to highlight the crucial role played by civil society organizations in schooling children, restoring documents, having DNA testing, preparing communities to accept them, and raising awareness among parents. Now more than two years passed since the first group was repatriated in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and children changed a lot since then. They are enjoying studying at school, they receive very good marks, they win prizes in school competitions. Repatriated children are studying at school and majority of them are well-integrated.

There are still some challenges, especially there is an issue to resolve the problem of guardianship and it is the case for children repatriated from Iraqi prisons. These children still remain in state institutions and relatives are not ready to take them Tajikistan repatriated 84 children, so there was a hope that relatives might take them. We hope that Kyrgyzstan that repatriated 74 children from Iraq won't face the same issue.

I stop here, there are so many important and interesting issues to discuss related to the experiences of CA states. The Bulan Institute will be sharing best practices of CA states and meanwhile I invite you to read our report, you can find it in our website.

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