



High-Level International Conference on Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM



GOBIERNO
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PRESS RELEASE

HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE CALLS ON MEMBER STATES TO EMBED HUMAN RIGHTS, THE RULE OF LAW AND CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVES INTO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE TO TERRORISM

MÁLAGA (Spain), 11 May 2022 – The first high-level international conference on Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism, jointly organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and Spain, concluded today in Málaga. More than 430 participants, among them member states, regional and international organizations, United Nations entities and 44 Civil Society organizations, came together to exchange ideas and experiences and urged better integration of human rights, the rule of law and civil society voices in counter-terrorism efforts, in line with the 7th review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Presenting the co-chairs summary for the conference during the closing session, **Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism**, stressed that *“our collective efforts against terrorism cannot succeed if they neglect or abuse the rule of law and human rights, if they undermine civic space and principled humanitarian action, and if they fail to advance the rights of the child, women, and victims.”* He further highlighted the need to bring perpetrators of terrorist offences to justice while ensuring accountability for human right violations and abuses committed by state or non-state actors in the name of counter-terrorism.

In his concluding remarks, **H.E. Mr. Fernando Grande-Marlaska, Minister of the Interior of Spain** said *“Spain is a country that can bear witness to the harshness with which terrorism strikes democratic societies, but it can also prove that democratic values offer us useful tools to defeat terrorist organisations.”*

The conference recognized significant gaps and growth areas in how human rights, the rule of law and civil society are currently incorporated in counter-terrorism efforts. Participants outlined the

adverse impact of many counter-terrorism laws, policies, and practices on the rule of law and human rights, stressing that vague or overly broad definitions of terrorism often oppress civil society actors and human rights defenders. The need for transformative approaches to civil society inclusion, as well as for consolidated support to victims of terrorism was also raised. A dedicated segment on the impact of counter-terrorism measures on principled humanitarian action highlighted crucial challenges faced by aid agencies in reaching people in need in armed conflict-settings where terrorist groups are active.

The high-level conference will culminate in an outcome document reflecting key conclusions from the discussions at the conference. It will be developed by UNOCT and Spain, in consultation with civil society.

Civil society organizations contributed to all parts of the conference and shared their experiences as eminent speakers in the high-level opening segment, and as co-moderators and panelists of the five thematic working sessions. Civil society organizations, human rights defender and victims' associations also shaped the conference agenda in several rounds of consultations with key United Nations entities.

The Conference was preceded on 9 May by a dedicated Civil Society Workshop, organized by the Kingdom of Spain and Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, which resulted in a draft Civil Society Outcome Document with findings and recommendations that will be attached to and inform the main conference outcome document to ensure that civil society organizations' valuable voices are represented. A series of six side events, each jointly organized by UNOCT, a member state and a civil society organization on the margins of the Conference gathered over 100 civil society representatives in-person and over one thousand viewers online.

The conference also launched the "Memories" campaign, a film and a photo exhibition showcasing the stories of victims of terrorism from across the globe. The conference conclusions will feed into the first Global Congress dedicated to victims of terrorism in September 2022 and the third United Nations High-level Conference of Head of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States to be held in New York in July 2023.

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