



UNITED NATIONS  
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM  
Programme Office in Doha

International Hub on  
Behavioural Insights  
to Counter Terrorism



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

### Inauguration of the Academy on Behavioural Insights to prevent and counter violent extremism

**Doha, State of Qatar, 8 May 2023** – The Behavioural Insights Academy (BI Academy) training course was inaugurated in Doha today by the International Hub on Behavioural Insights of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT BI Hub), in partnership with Qatar’s Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU).

The new BI Hub’s flagship academy programme is the first of its kind to feature capacity-building in behavioural insights tailored for the international community of practice in preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE). More than 50 PCVE practitioners, and representatives from civil society, governmental institutions, and United Nations entities gathered in Doha for the training course.

At the opening session, **Mr. Muhammad Rafiuddin Shah**, Chief of UNOCT’s Policy, Knowledge and Coordination Branch in New York thanked the State of Qatar and Hamad Bin Khalifa University for establishing a strategic partnership with the UNOCT BI Hub and for hosting the BI Academy at its campus. “Qatar’s support has been instrumental in the development of the BI Academy, which we believe will have a significant impact on promoting global peace and security”, he added.

**Dr. Leslie A. Pal**, Founding Dean of the College of Public Policy at Hamad Bin Khalifa University expressed his strong support for the partnership with UNOCT. He thanked his colleague, Dr. M. Evren Tok, Associate Dean for Community Engagement (CPP), for having facilitated this excellent event. “CPP has a special interest in the role of higher education institutions in countering violent extremism and supporting humanitarian assistance, as well as in approaching these challenges with the latest tools in policy design,” he said.

During the 5-day inaugural course, led by renowned experts, participants will learn how to lead their organizations in adopting behavioural insights at the core of their programmatic work. Beyond skill-building, the UNOCT BI Academy programme emphasizes the need for a “learning-by-doing” approach, allowing participants to develop their unique, creative and science-based solutions to PCVE challenges within their respective areas of expertise and professional environments.

The first two days of in-depth practice will feature coaching, mentorship, and group exercises in three key BI areas: Mental Health, Social Psychology and Behavioural Economics. The following two days will be dedicated to behavioural design with participants developing their own BI intervention “test project” and assessing the efficiency of its future implementation. Trainees will also gain an understanding of insights from the existing empirical literature in the context of countering-terrorism and preventing violent extremism. These include identity formation and narrative construction, as well as ingroup-outgroup psychology, social norms in radical groups, situational and contextual influences on decision making, and cognitive scarcity, among others.

The BI Academy programme is comprised of 3 modules. The “Academic Phase” lays the foundation for the programme through its comprehensive 5-day curriculum. It is followed by a “support phase” during which experts will provide guidance and mentorship to participants in developing behavioural solutions to PCVE-related challenges. In the concluding “launch phase”, participants will be able to leverage their respective projects to further institutionalise behavioural capacity within their professional context and in their respective fields of work.

"We are proud to launch the BI Academy as a flagship project of the UNOCT BI Hub. This capacity-building initiative is designed to equip participants with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively prevent and counter terrorism in their respective countries. We are confident that this initiative will contribute to building more resilient and safer communities across the globe", stressed **Dr Aynabat Atayeva**, Chief of UNOCT’s International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism in Doha as she concluded the opening session.

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For more information:

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Visit the UNOCT BI Academy webpage [here](#)