



VIRTUAL COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

6-10 JULY 2020

Webinar IV: Protecting and Promoting Human Rights as a Cornerstone for Building Resilience against Terrorism

9 July, 9:00 -11:00 EST

Concept Note

Terrorism adversely impacts the enjoyment of fundamental human rights, threatens peace, security and development, and exacerbates societal tensions and vulnerabilities. Measures that States adopt in countering terrorism may also further infringe on human rights, perpetuate discrimination, entrench impunity, and make it more difficult for affected individuals, groups and communities to recover from the violence and destruction of terrorism and rebuild their lives and societies. Violent extremism conducive to terrorism thrives in these contexts as anger and disenchantment caused by inequalities, poor governance, weaknesses in rule of law institutions, and human rights violations enable violent extremist and terrorist groups to spread their ideologies and recruit new foot soldiers.

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288), various resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, and the Secretary-General's Call to Action on Human Rights underscore that respect for human rights and the rule of law is the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism. In Pillar IV of the Global Strategy, in particular, Member States reaffirmed that "the promotion and protection of human rights for all and the rule of law is essential to all components of the Strategy, recognizing that effective counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing, and stressing the need to promote and protect the rights of victims of terrorism."

In keeping with various counter-terrorism conventions and other international legal instruments, States are responsible to adopt human-rights compliant counter-terrorism law, policies, practices and other measures – including those related to the use of technologies, preventing violent extremism, management of international borders, countering the financing of terrorism, protecting cyberspace and other similar themes. Upholding human rights in countering terrorism also helps address the conditions conducive to violent



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extremism. This webinar will apply a human rights lens to these issues, particularly in the context of the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic where some States are using the crisis as a pretext to adopt or apply out of context sweeping counter-terrorism measures that violate human rights.

Another critical subject to be addressed in this webinar is how to promote the role of women in the counter-terrorism space and address the threats to women's human rights defenders from terrorism and violent extremism. These issues, as well as the violations caused by the non-compliance of States' counter-terrorism measures with human rights law, have featured high on the agenda of the UN Security Council. In resolution 2242 (2015), the Council specifically highlights the differentiated impacts of terrorism and violent extremism on the human rights of women and girls, including the use of sexual and gender-based violence as strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups. In resolution 2493 (2019), the Council also calls for greater recognition, support and protection of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders.

The capacity for individuals, groups (including victim's groups, women's human rights defenders, youths and civil society organizations) and countries to prevent, mitigate or absorb the shock of terrorism therefore is founded on respect for human rights of all peoples by the State, both in times of crisis as well as during recovery from the violence, destruction and societal tensions to build inclusive institutions. As the Secretary-General reminded in the Call to Action on Human Rights:

“Human rights face few greater tests than when conflicts erupt, terrorists attack or disaster strikes. International human rights, refugee and humanitarian law can restore a measure of humanity in even the darkest moments. Let me also underscore that even necessary efforts to combat terrorism must not compromise human rights. Otherwise, counter-terror actions will be counter-productive...”

Security Council resolution 2462 (2019) signals a strong call by the international community to all Member States to step up their fight against terrorist financing, while also ensuring that all national measures comply with international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law. However, many Member States continue to face challenges in the effective enactment of legislation and regulations that uphold human rights and individual freedoms, as well as protect humanitarian and civic space. While several



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Intergovernmental organizations have offered advice and guidance on compliance of counter-terrorism measures with human rights obligations, actual on-the-ground implementation by States and businesses regulated by them in many cases remains uneven or short of the desired levels. The discussions during this session would therefore identify good practices through which national efforts on countering terrorist financing could also ensure the protection of human rights and humanitarian space.

This webinar will provide an opportunity for Member States, UN entities, and civil society actors, including women's groups, to identify strategies for placing human rights at the core of all efforts by States to combat terrorism, and innovative approaches for supporting communities, especially marginalized and vulnerable groups, in building resilience in the face of terrorism and violent extremism.

Key Issues to be addressed:

- *Ensuring counter-terrorism measures are consistent with international human rights law*
- *Risks and challenges to the promotion and protection of human rights related to the use of counter-terrorism technologies, tools, resources and legislation to support the COVID-19 response*
- *How to better integrate the role and protection of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders into PCVE and CT in line with Security Council Resolution 2493 (2019)?*
- *What are the challenges civil society faces in the protection and promotion of human rights in the counter-terrorism context?*
- *How to address risks involved with countering the financing of terrorism while safeguarding humanitarian assistance?*
- *What are the new capacity-building needs and challenges under Security Council resolution 2462 (2019)?*