

2021 United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week

21-30 June 2021

Side event

“Towards ensuring meaningful accountability: linkages between terrorism and serious violations of international humanitarian law”

Friday, 25 June 2021, 10.00-11.30 a.m. EDT

Opening remarks of

**Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninsx
Executive Director
Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)**

Mr. Ambassador, Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,

The obligation of States to bring the perpetrators of terrorist acts to justice is well established under international law.

That obligation was clearly set forth by the Security Council in its landmark resolution 1373 (2001), adopted in the aftermath of the “9/11” attacks.

The Council has since repeatedly stressed the need to ensure that terrorist acts, as defined in the Council’s resolutions and in the international counter-terrorism instruments:

- **are criminalized in domestic law;**
- **that the relevant conduct is duly investigated and prosecuted; and**
- **that States assist one another in connection with terrorism-related criminal investigations and criminal justice proceedings, including in obtaining necessary evidence.**

The Council has also consistently emphasized that rule of law-based criminal justice responses to terrorism are a central element of effective global counter-terrorism efforts.

This includes efforts in response to the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon, as highlighted in Council resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017), as well as the 2015 Madrid Guiding Principles and the 2018 Addendum.

In this context, the Council has denounced systematic and widespread abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law committed by terrorist groups, and called for accountability.

Those abuses and violations include:

- The indiscriminate killing and deliberate targeting of civilians,**
- Mass executions and extrajudicial killings, including of children,**
- Kidnapping of civilians and arbitrary detention,**
- Recruitment and use of children in hostilities,**
- Rape and other forms of sexual violence, and**
- Attacks on, and destruction of, protected objects such as schools, hospitals, and cultural and religious sites.**

Against this background, it is my pleasure to welcome our expert panellists, who will contribute their invaluable expertise and experience to our discussions today.

They will address the interface between terrorism and crimes under international law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

They will explore challenges, innovative approaches and emerging good practices in comprehensive approaches to ensure accountability in a manner that duly serves the interest of justice, including the interest of victims of these heinous crimes, and also contributes towards effective and sustainable counter-terrorism that promotes international peace and security.

Our discussions will also touch upon the use of non-traditional types of information and evidence in criminal justice proceedings (including e-evidence, open source and social media intelligence, as well as information collected or obtained from conflict zones).

It will further tackle ways in which such information can be used in criminal justice proceedings in a manner that is effective and in line with applicable international law, including internationally recognized fair-trial standards.

Mr. Ambassador, Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,

Ensuring an effective and efficient approach to accountability has posed considerable challenges to criminal justice actors at the domestic level.

Those challenges have been well documented in CTED's research and analysis and in its ongoing dialogue with Member States and other relevant stakeholders, conducted in the context of the Counter-Terrorism Committee's assessments.

This year's commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1373 (2001) gives us all an opportunity to reflect upon our experiences in countering terrorism over the past two decades.

Those two decades have taught us to recognize that impunity is a condition conducive to radicalization to violence.

They have also reaffirmed that justice, including for victims, is a key ingredient of efforts to strengthen societal cohesion and increase community resilience.

They have also confirmed that meaningful accountability is the bedrock of the rule of law and is essential to ensuring sustainable peace and security at the international, regional and domestic levels.

In view of the growing number and complexity of the challenges we face, it is essential that we continue to strengthen our cooperative efforts in this area.

I wish you a productive and enlightening discussion.

Thank you.