



# United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee

## Global survey of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and other relevant resolutions by Member States

### Executive summary

The nature of the global terrorist threat has continued to evolve since 2016, compelling Member States to adapt their policies and approaches to address new challenges and existing gaps in their counter-terrorism measures. Those challenges include the evolution of the foreign terrorist fighter (FTF) threat; the rising threat of terrorism in conflict areas; the emergence of new terrorist methodologies; the growing threat of **terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance**,<sup>1</sup> along with the growing emergence of some transnational linkages between such terrorist groups, and most recently, the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

### Global threat outlook

Although many of these challenges are global, terrorism has continued to affect States, regions, and subregions differently.

The **North Africa** region continues to face threats from terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Daesh); and FTFs who travelled to Iraq or the Syrian Arab Republic. The undetected return of FTFs to their countries of origin following ISIL's territorial defeat poses additional security challenges. Moreover, lone actors and small cells have carried out a number of deadly attacks in recent years in several North African States and have proven difficult to detect.

In **East Africa**, Al-Shabaab (which pledged allegiance to Al-Qaida in 2012) remains the most active terrorist group, conducting attacks primarily in Somalia, but also in neighbouring States. It remains highly adaptable, and its indirect fire attacks against aircraft and airfields increased in 2021. Since 2016, Al-Shabaab has also committed significant, complex and deadly attacks outside Somalia, including in Kenya. Recruitment and radicalization activities are ongoing concerns.

Since 2016, **Southern Africa** has seen a dramatic increase in terrorist activity, notably in northern Mozambique and along Mozambique's border with Tanzania. As of June 2019, ISIL-associated elements operating under the banner of Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP), began to claim responsibility for violent attacks in the area.

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<sup>1</sup> While the Security Council has not established an internationally agreed terminology regarding this threat, the Counter Terrorism Committee noted, in its previous documents, that many of the Member States recently assessed by the CTC have referred to terrorist acts committed by such individuals and groups through a range of different terminologies.



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**West Africa** faces an extremely high terrorist threat. The dramatic increase in terrorist activity in the subregion is primarily due to two groups: Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). Although the territorial presence and activity of Al-Qaida and its affiliates (particularly Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)) was initially limited to the extreme north of Mali, it has now expanded across large areas of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The growing strength of ISIL in West Africa has compounded the terrorist threat and contributed to the deteriorating security situation in the subregion.

**Central African** States face multiple terrorist threats. Boko Haram's terrorist activity has spread from its original area of operation in north-eastern Nigeria into the entire Lake Chad Basin region, affecting the Far North region in Cameroon and Lake Chad Province in Chad. Boko Haram has splintered into two main groups (one of which, Islamist State West Africa Province (ISWAP), is directly affiliated with ISIL), and a third group, Ba Koura. Collectively, they remain major threats for States located around the Lake Chad Basin.

Violence perpetrated by other armed groups, including in Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, continues to pose a threat to the overall stability of this subregion.

The **South-East Asia** region has been infiltrated by ISIL-inspired FTFs, and local terrorist groups continue to be inspired by, and pledge allegiance to, ISIL. This subregion remains a source, transit point and destination for ISIL fighters, as well as for militants connected to, inter alia, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Al-Qaida, and Jemaah Islamiyah.

In **South Asia**, the overall threat level remains high, with several States suffering attacks since the previous global survey. Many Al-Qaida and ISIL-affiliated terrorist groups (including Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant - Khorasan (ISIL - K), as well as their affiliates such as Haqqani Network (HQN), Lashkar-E-Tayyiba, Jaish-I-Mohammed and Harakat Ul-Mujahidin) are active in the subregion. Much of the terrorist activity in the subregion appears to be ISIL-inspired, if not directed (although ISIL has claimed credit for some attacks, despite a lack of evidence to substantiate its claims). The recent developments in Afghanistan, including the suicide bombing at the international airport in Kabul, raise concerns regarding the terrorist threat in the country and the region.

**Central Asia** continues to face significant security challenges, including due to its proximity to regions marked by terrorist activity, illicit drugs and arms trafficking, vulnerability to terrorist propaganda and recruitment, and risks associated with widespread reliance on alternative money remittances. Although there has been a relatively limited number of terrorism-related attacks or incidents in Central Asia in recent years, the number of terrorist attacks carried out by Central Asians outside the region has increased. Returning and relocating FTFs are also a challenge.



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Ten of the 12 Member States of **Western Asia** have been affected by terrorist attacks. The fragility of the political and security situation in some of the States continues to warrant vigilance. ISIL remains an active terrorist threat within the borders of some States of this subregion, including States experiencing a fragile political and security situation. ISIL views that most of those States should observe a stricter interpretation of religious teachings. The proximity to the armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the activities of various terrorist organizations continue to greatly exacerbate the terrorist risk to Western Asia, owing in part to the continued displacement of people from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, causing continued cross-border security concerns and significant political and economic tensions for States located in this subregion.

Although the **East Asia** subregion was believed to be largely untouched by the conflicts in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, reports indicate that ISIL and affiliated groups did recruit individuals from this subregion as FTFs.

The terrorism risk to States of the **Pacific Islands** subregion is low, owing to their isolated geographic location, transport limitations, their small size and populations (factors that limit anonymity), and their relatively small financial and commercial sectors. No State of this subregion has experienced a terrorist attack.

The **Central America** subregion faces challenges relating to violence and corruption stemming from organized crime and drug trafficking. Even though the terrorist threat remains low, States of the subregion have continued to strengthen their counter-terrorism efforts, primarily within the framework of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism of the Organization of American States (OAS/CICTE). Recent evidence indicates that criminal organizations may be adopting tactics **similar to those** associated with terrorist organizations and that new trends and cells inspired by violent extremism conducive to terrorism have surfaced in the subregion.

In the **Caribbean**, terrorism remains a low probability, high-impact threat. Governments of the subregion are aware of the evolving and decentralized threat posed by international terrorist groups, including ISIL and Al-Qaida. The risk of recruitment to terrorism and radicalization to violent extremism conducive to terrorism, the volume and accessibility of terrorist propaganda, and the potential for exploitation of many States' banking systems and informal economies to fund terrorist networks remain sources of concern. Moreover, because of its geography, this subregion is vulnerable to maritime criminal activity, including the smuggling of drugs; small arms and light weapons (SALW); people; and chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) materials.

All **South American** States have recognized the threat posed by terrorism — despite the general perception that the terrorist threat to the subregion is low — and have gradually introduced measures to prevent terrorist acts and the movement of terrorists across borders. Nonetheless, the subregion remains vulnerable to terrorism financing; transnational organized crime; the illicit cross-border movement of funds, arms and people; and other threats potentially linked to terrorism.



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Small numbers of South American nationals are known to have travelled to the conflict zones of Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic in support of ISIL.

Most States of **Eastern Europe** have a comparatively low level of risk, but some smaller-scale attacks or plots have occurred. The threat level in the Russian Federation has decreased in recent years. The risk of terrorist attacks **on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance** is a growing threat across the subregion. States of this subregion located on both sides of the eastern border of the Schengen area have a risk of being used as transit States for illicit movements of people, weapons and cash. In 2020, Heads of the CIS Member States adopted the Programme of Cooperation of the CIS Member States in Strengthening Border Security at External Borders for 2021-2025.

States of the **Western Europe, North American and other States** group have continued to suffer from a steady rate of terrorist attacks over the past five years. **Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States** have also experienced terrorist activity since the previous global survey. The risk profile is not evenly spread, however. Some States (e.g., Australia, France, Germany and the United Kingdom) have experienced a disproportionately high level of incidents. Nevertheless, smaller-scale or less-frequent attacks continued to occur throughout Western and Central Europe, including in Austria, Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

All States of this group face varying, but increasing challenges posed by terrorist **attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance**. This threat is becoming increasingly organized and transnational. Recent trends indicate the increasing prevalence of “lone actor” attacks. There is also a low residual risk of terrorist attacks resulting from historical sectarian divisions. However, these conflicts (although not fully resolved) are typically being addressed through political means.

**South-East Europe** has been largely free of terrorist attacks in the five years since the previous global survey, and its risk is low compared to that of other European subregions. There remains the underlying risk that this subregion remains attractive to those seeking to transit between the European Union and conflict zones. Other continued risks in this subregion include relatively high levels of organized crime and arms trafficking and their potential linkages to terrorism.

### **Responses of the Security Council and Member States**

In response to the rapidly evolving terrorist threat, the Security Council has adopted a number of targeted resolutions — notably including resolutions 2395 (2017) and 2396 (2017) — which identify a number of required responses and associated challenges.

The need to develop **comprehensive and integrated national strategies** to ensure an effective and holistic approach in countering terrorism is one of the key issues addressed by the Counter-



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Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) within the framework of its dialogue with Member States on behalf of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. Since the previous survey, CTED has identified an increase in the number of Member States taking steps to develop a broader counter-terrorism approach, including by engaging a wider range of stakeholders, beyond law enforcement agencies.

Pursuant to Council resolutions 2178 (2014), 2322 (2016), 2396 (2017) and 2462 (2019), Member States have accelerated the review of their existing **legislative and administrative frameworks** and, where necessary, enacted new measures to incorporate the requirements of the relevant Council resolutions into domestic law. However, despite this progress, the degree to which the relevant offences have been codified varies and continues to require careful monitoring.

In assessing and monitoring legislative developments in Member States, the Committee and CTED have frequently identified shortcomings relating to domestic **definitions of terrorism** and terrorism-related offences. The Committee has recommended that States adopt a clear and precise definition of terrorism that corresponds to the requirements of the international counter-terrorism instruments to which they are parties and, the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, and is consistent with other relevant international law obligations, norms and standards, including international human rights law, as applicable. The Committee has also noted that definitional shortcomings can undermine international cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

A number of Council resolutions, including resolutions 1373 (2001), 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017), stress the need for Member States to ensure effective **criminal justice** responses to terrorism. Because effective prosecution of counter-terrorism cases relies on specific skills and expertise, States' investigative, prosecutorial and judicial authorities must develop ways to deal with the increasing complexity of such cases. Most States visited by the Committee continue to experience difficulties in their efforts to implement these requirements, including with respect to their use of intelligence information in a criminal justice context and international cooperation in criminal justice matters (mutual legal assistance, extradition, and international cooperation in gathering and using digital evidence in terrorism cases).

In addressing the evolving risks posed by foreign terrorist fighters, Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2396 (2017) establish requirements for States to develop and implement comprehensive and tailored **prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration** (PRR) strategies. Many States that are affected by terrorism (including the FTF phenomenon) have yet to develop and/or implement comprehensive PRR strategies. In some cases, the relevant measures are implemented on an ad hoc basis, which may result in the allocation of insufficient structural, financial, and human resources. The adoption of ad hoc measures in the absence of an overall strategy creates the risk that States will adopt and implement ineffective measures at the domestic level. CTED's analysis has identified a widespread need to strengthen coordination between criminal justice actors and other relevant stakeholders in this regard.



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In designing PRR-related laws, policies and measures, only a few States have conducted meaningful public consultations that include all relevant stakeholders, in particular communities most affected by terrorism. Inclusive and participatory law and policymaking on often sensitive PRR issues will promote the legitimacy and thereby the effectiveness of the resulting measures.

Member States also face considerable challenges in their efforts to develop and implement measures aimed **at preventing and countering terrorism in the context of armed conflict**. Armed conflicts (in particular, those of a protracted nature) and the resulting violence, instability, and breakdown of rule-of-law institutions act as drivers of violent extremism that may lead to terrorism. Such conditions can render individuals and communities vulnerable to recruitment, including through the exploitation of deep-rooted grievances caused by the conflict and the often-associated governance and accountability gap. Moreover, conflict-related institutional, social and economic vulnerabilities may also significantly undermine counter-terrorism efforts and impair their long-term sustainability.

The Security Council has regularly stressed that Member States' efforts to prevent and combat terrorism and violent extremism must comply with their obligations under international law, including **international humanitarian law**. The Council has also underlined that counter-terrorism strategies should aim to ensure sustainable peace and security and that respect for international law is essential to the success of counter-terrorism efforts. The associated obligations are particularly relevant in the context of addressing the FTF phenomenon.

Terrorism and violent extremism can be significant contributing factors to humanitarian crises, including complex emergencies resulting from a combination of natural and man-made elements, such as severe climatic disasters and armed conflict. Emergencies of this nature require a swift and effective humanitarian response that is delivered in a neutral, independent and impartial manner. Terrorist activity also endangers humanitarian actors and can undermine humanitarian action. ISIL and other terrorist groups have declared aid workers "legitimate targets" and called on their followers to "fight" humanitarian organizations.

In their efforts to guarantee the **criminal accountability** of FTFs, States' criminal justice systems have been required to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate conduct perpetrated thousands of miles away, often in conflict zones experiencing a breakdown of rule-of-law institutions and the proliferation of armed non-State actors. Effectively prosecuting related conduct perpetrated in conflict zones requires the use, consistent with internationally recognized fair trial standards, of non-traditional types of information and evidence, including e-evidence, open source and social media intelligence, and information collected or obtained from conflict zones, including by military actors. This presents significant challenges for many States which, if left unaddressed, may lead to impunity and denial of justice to victims of terrorism and to society more broadly.



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**Terrorists and terrorist groups continue to raise funds** through, inter alia, abuse of legitimate enterprises and non-profit organizations, exploitation of natural resources, donations, crowdfunding, and the proceeds of criminal activity, including kidnapping for ransom, extortion, illicit trade and trafficking in cultural property, trafficking in persons, drug trafficking and the illicit trade in SALW. These funds are moved not only by “traditional” means, such as formal banking systems, financial institutions, money service businesses or informal financial networks and cash-couriers, but also through the use of emerging payment methods such as prepaid cards, mobile wallets or virtual assets.

Member States have increasingly introduced amendments to their countering the financing of terrorism (CFT) legislation to address the requirements of the relevant Council resolutions, recommendations made by the Counter-Terrorism Committee pursuant to its country assessment visits, and mutual evaluations and follow-up processes of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the FATF-style regional bodies (FSRBs). However, many of the newly adopted or amended CFT laws and mechanisms are not used consistently or fully. Many States continue to require technical assistance, training and related equipment in this area and should establish platforms for the sharing of effective practices and useful experiences.

As States continue to strengthen their CFT legislation and operational measures, there is considerable debate as to the extent to which those measures **might impact purely humanitarian activities**, including in conflict zones with active terrorist activity. The COVID-19 pandemic has also raised additional concerns regarding the potential impact of CFT measures on emergency responses.

Member States’ implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) has been greatly enhanced by their establishment of dedicated **law enforcement** counter-terrorism units and their training of specialized counter-terrorism officers to investigate terrorist acts. A significant number of States have also developed this capacity using computerized tools, establishing watch lists and databases, cross-checking criminal files, and expanding information-exchange systems.

Member States have made some progress in enhancing counter-terrorism law enforcement and security cooperation and coordination, with the support of inter-agency information-sharing functions or fusion cells. Member States have also adopted their national law enforcement plans of action to prevent and combat terrorism and strengthened international cooperation, including by extending access to the I-24/7 global police communications system of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

**Effective control of maritime, land and air borders** is essential in countering terrorism because it represents the first line of defence against the cross-border movement of terrorists, illicit goods and cargo. However, the considerable length of many States’ borders, the complex terrain that they



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often traverse, the increasing presence of unofficial border crossing points (BCPs), and the use of broken travel pose significant challenges to Member States in this regard.

Member States have also continued to confront the threat posed by terrorist **exploitation of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs), including social media**, to commit terrorist acts and to facilitate a wide range of terrorist activities, including incitement to violence, radicalization, recruitment, training, planning, collection of information, communications, preparation, and financing. Terrorists and terrorist groups **motivated by xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance** are taking advantage of technological advances to adapt their operational methods, whether by consolidating traditional techniques for disseminating propaganda and violent narratives, sourcing weapons and other support, or developing new techniques.

The use of **technologies for terrorist purposes** — including artificial intelligence, content moderation, and digital/e-evidence — is an issue of growing concern to practitioners, policymakers and researchers in the context of the increasing use of technology in terrorism and counter-terrorism.

The Security Council continues to affirm that States must ensure that any measures taken to counter terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international **human rights** law, international refugee law, and international humanitarian law. The Committee has therefore continued to address relevant human rights issues in its assessments of States' implementation of resolution 1373 (2001). This is important, not only in the context of States' legal obligations but also because respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are complementary and mutually reinforcing with effective counter-terrorism measures and are an essential part of a successful counter-terrorism effort. The Executive Directorate's analysis and research demonstrate that some States have implemented measures to enhance the consistency of their counter-terrorism laws and policies with their applicable international legal obligations. However, CTED's overall assessment is that most States have not done enough in this critical area.

The Security Council recognizes that terrorism and violent extremism have a differential impact on the human rights of women and girls and that, in turn, counter-terrorism strategies may have a differential impact on women, including on women's human rights and women's civil society organizations. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015), a growing number of Council resolutions on terrorism have integrated **gender considerations**, including on issues such as PRR; countering terrorist narratives; and addressing the links between terrorism, trafficking in persons, and conflict-related sexual violence.