

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)

Joint open briefing of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee on “ISIL in Africa: nature of threat and responses”

7 April 2022, 3:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.

Draft concept note

I. Objective

1. The purpose of the joint open briefing is to examine the evolution of the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Daesh, in Africa, as well as Member States’ responses to the threat and continuing challenges. To do so, the joint open briefing will bring together representatives of Member States, analysts, policymakers, representatives of civil society and researchers — including members of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)’s Global Research Network (GRN).

II. Context and background¹

2. The Security Council has consistently reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Since 2015, CTED, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), and the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities have prepared strategic-level reports every six months on behalf of the Secretary-General, which reflect the gravity of the threat posed by ISIL and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat. ISIL appears to be gaining strength and expanding in several African regions, as demonstrated by its increased use of narratives and propaganda presenting the continent at the core of its fight and the increased volume of attacks perpetrated by ISIL affiliates, which have caused a large number of casualties. The main ISIL affiliates in West Africa are the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), which is present mainly in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which is present mainly in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region more generally. ISIL’s increasing presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Libya, Somalia and Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado Province is a development of significant concern. In addition, the success of the Taliban in Afghanistan may have also emboldened Al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist groups around the world, including in Africa.

3. Since its establishment in 2015, and particularly over the past two years, ISGS has gained significant traction and is believed to be responsible for over half the deaths caused by militant Islamist violence in the Sahel in 2020. ISGS has adapted to temporary setbacks (e.g., successful military operations in the tri-State border region of Liptako-Gourma and conflict with the Al-Qaida-affiliated *Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin* (JNIM)) by regrouping

¹ Security Council resolution 2129 (2014), paragraph 5, directs the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) to identify emerging issues, trends and developments in relation to resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005). Security Council resolution 2617 (2021), paragraph 20, “reiterates the essential role of CTED within the United Nations to identify and assess issues, trends, and developments relating to the implementation of [relevant] resolutions”. Security Council resolution 2368 (2017), paragraph 98, “directs the Committee, with the assistance of its Monitoring Team, to hold special meetings on important thematic or regional topics and Member States’ capacity challenges, in consultation, as appropriate, with the Counter-Terrorism Committee and CTED”.

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)

and resuming its violent activities elsewhere within those States. Within the first six months of 2021, the group had already claimed responsibility for the highest civilian death toll by an armed actor in Niger. In 2021, ISGS began asserting its form of governance and justice, as notably reflected by its presence at some village markets in Mali and Burkina Faso. ISWAP (which has been formally affiliated to ISIL since 2015) is seeking to expand its influence beyond its operational stronghold in northern Nigeria to the Lake Chad Basin region. In view of the events of May 2021, which led to the death of Abubakar Mohammed Shekau, leader of Boko Haram's historical faction *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad* (JAS), ISWAP has gained in strength by absorbing JAS fighters and is expected to consolidate its hold over the north-eastern region of Nigeria. In the Horn of Africa, the Islamic State in Somalia appears to have established a foothold, despite Al-Shabaab's dominant presence, providing guidance and support to the Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) affiliate. ISCAP has claimed responsibility for attacks in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Mozambique and Uganda. The extent of the relationship between perpetrators in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Somalia and Mozambique remains unclear.

4. The socio-political consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have created further vulnerabilities on the African continent and further exacerbated the threat posed by ISIL (which has called the pandemic as "divine punishment" for its enemies and stressed the opportunity to mount attacks while authorities' capacities are stretched).

5. In several African states, globally-aligned and operationally connected terrorism is being employed as part of, or alongside, militant movements pursuing specific political and economic goals at the local and national levels. This has meant that attempts to advance political stability through mediation of conflict, including those by the Security Council, and to provide humanitarian aid, are often undertaken alongside counter terrorism operations and strategies. The result is often a dissonance. The aims of the ISIL and Al Qaeda affiliates, and the leaders within them most committed to their cause, are incompatible with the constitutionally recognisable political demands that internationally-supported peace processes support. This divergence is therefore undermining the national stabilisation efforts that underpin traditional peacekeeping and peacebuilding, particularly when these groups undertake transnational terrorist attacks outside these parameters. The risk of a national stabilisation effort offering an opportunity for an ISIL or Al Qaeda affiliated group to attain state power without disavowing its affiliation with terrorism should not be underestimated. As such, it is important to find the right synergy between national counter terrorism, national peace mediation, regional security arrangements and international sanctions and support.

6. These developments in Africa could have far-reaching implications for peace and security in the region and elsewhere. They should be addressed through a coherent, regional approach as a matter of priority. African States have made significant efforts, and progress has been achieved in a range of areas, including, inter alia, through the adoption of specialized legislative frameworks, military actions, criminal justice responses, prosecution strategies, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies, enhanced regional cooperation, and measures aiming at addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. Multinational regional responses have also been observed throughout the continent, notably in the Sahel (e.g., G5 Sahel and its Joint Force), in the Lake Chad Basin (Lake Chad Basin Commission and Multinational Joint Task Force), Somalia (AMISOM) as well as more recently in Mozambique (deployment of troops under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)). Evolving international support has also played a significant role in developing an effective response. Ensuring coordinated and complementary efforts between and among all

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)

forces deployed in these regions, as well as compliance with and accountability with respect to international humanitarian law and international human rights law remains challenging. Responses grounded in local contexts and involving local stakeholders appear to be the most effective. Although African States recognize the importance of a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to address the root causes of the security challenges facing the continent, States' efforts to address vulnerabilities are constrained by limited resources and capacity. To implement a holistic approach that furthers a balanced implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy across all four of its pillars and contributes to sustainable progress, UN entities should be mindful of the whole of Security Council requirements related to counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

7. Faced by increasing pressure to understand and address the above-mentioned threats, Member States are called upon by the Security Council to adopt comprehensive counter-terrorism approaches and to strengthen their responses on multiple fronts. Multifaceted requirements (including the requirement to prosecute, rehabilitate and reintegrate terrorist suspects) require that the relevant authorities develop and mobilize all their capacities under a strategic umbrella and also comply with technologically advanced requirements (e.g., the need to develop advance passenger information (API) and Passenger Name Records (PNR) systems and introduce biometric capabilities), while also strengthening and expanding key enablers such as inter-agency cooperation between the military, law enforcement and prosecution, and the financing of terrorism. In this regard, Member State implementation of 1267 sanctions measures is critical in preventing terrorism and countering ISIL and Al Qaeda affiliated groups in Africa.

III. Format

8. Pursuant to the list of regional and thematic briefings for 2021 adopted by the Counter-Terrorism Committee on 29 April 2021, the joint open briefing will consist of an opening session by two Chairs; presentations by experts and researchers; an interactive discussion; and a closing session by the two Chairs. The two Chairs will moderate each of the sessions. Representatives of CTED will serve as rapporteurs. Member States and participants will be encouraged to interact and ask questions during the question-and-answer session.

9. The joint open briefing will be held in a hybrid format. It will be held in person in the Economic and Social Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York, with limited seating capacity for Committee members, Member States, CTED, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, United Nations entities, and international and regional organizations. Some of the speakers and additional participants will connect via an online platform.

10. Member States, United Nations entities, and international and regional organizations wishing to participate are requested to fill in the form available [here](#) in order to confirm their participation. Those unable to participate in the event may submit questions to the panellists via e-mail to julien.savoye@un.org until First April 2022.

11. The agenda and documentation will be posted on the Counter-Terrorism Committee's website (<http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/>).

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)

IV. Date and venue

12. The open briefing will be streamed live on UN Web TV on 7 April 2022, from 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.

V. Communications

13. The open briefing will be promoted through the appropriate channels. A press release may be issued following the open briefing.