

**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.

Session II: Overview of responses, progress achieved, and challenges

Statement

of

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Thank you, Madame Chair.

The Security Council has long recognized the importance of civil society to increase awareness of the threat of terrorism and to understand efforts and options to counter it more effectively.

The knowledge and tremendous diversity of civil society enriches our collective understanding of the different challenges and the means at our disposal to respond.

Last fall, to gain insights in relation to ISIL in Africa, CTED convened two roundtables, gathering over 50 representatives of civil society organisations from 15 Member States on the continent.

Their work included helping communities to develop resilience to terrorism, victims to rebuild their lives and support to reintegration programmes for former members of terrorist groups. Their long and lived experience addressing these issues yielded the perspectives captured in the publication distributed today.

I have the privilege to highlight some key elements:

As with earlier speakers, civil society observed the expansion of terrorism associated to ISIL across Africa. They noted that the combination of local capacity and global Islamic State affiliation/ aspiration carries significant implications for effective policy responses.

- In some contexts, certain communities, such as Christians, are targeted in addition to that of the State.
- In most, the instrumentalization of longstanding socio-economic and other grievances paired with approaches that offer alternative governance is particularly challenging.
- The groups' operations and recruitment cut across several States and regions. The increased cross-border connections and movements point to the exploitation of existing vulnerabilities and demand responses that cater to these regional dimensions.

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

Notwithstanding comprehensive strategies or action plans, security and military-led responses continue to dominate efforts and to cause concern.

- On the one hand, over securitized approaches squeeze communities; and in some instances, military offensives against ISIL-affiliated groups have apparently prompted reprisal attacks against civilians.
- On the other, due to the prevailing insecurity, over-stretched militaries are also asked to perform tasks outside their usual mandate: such as making arrests, collecting evidence and cooperating closely with criminal justice authorities.
- In some cases, the military has taken the initiative to lead rehabilitation programmes.
- While circumstances may continue to necessitate the expanded role of the military, it has, to some extent, coloured the way in which such efforts are perceived and accepted by communities, underlying the call for more comprehensive solutions.

While recognizing progress, civil society representatives also expressed dissatisfaction with criminal justice aspects.

- Lack of resources and capacity, as well as heavy-handed efforts, impeded its effectiveness.
- In other cases, where justice was not advanced as part of a response to terrorism, this too raised concerns. Where terrorist violence is ongoing, efforts aimed primarily (or only) at reintegration were considered premature and inadequate.

Operationalizing a comprehensive approach was recognized as clearly challenging.

- Non-security initiatives were often unfunded or underfunded, despite principled commitments.
- Where governments have demonstrated a greater willingness to collaborate with communities and faith-based organizations, a number of barriers to cooperation, including distrust, persisted.
- Insufficient support for communities and victims, including lack of compensation and programmes, particularly for women, further undermined the overall effectiveness of these efforts.
- Compounding physical injury and damage, civil society flagged the disturbing ripple effect of terrorism. For example, some communities engaged in harmful cultural practices such as “breast-ironing” to delay the appearance of puberty in girls and prevent their abduction and forced marriage.

Several proposals, some very concrete, were advanced:

- The call to consistently protect and respect human rights was clear, including by thoroughly investigating and ensuring justice for past abuses. Capacity building was urged on a number of fronts: to facilitate a culture change, to support evidence gathering and to build trust between the military and criminal justice authorities.
- Closer collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders such as local communities, religious leaders, women and youth, was urged to develop psychological support and meaningful vocational programmes; as well as to deepen understanding of radicalization, recruitment, and other aspects of violent extremism conducive to terrorism in affected communities.
- Sensitization of security forces to the benefits of such partnerships and the importance of building trust with communities was promoted.
- At the same time, engagement with communities was seen as important to expand their own thinking and to dissuade them from advocating overly harsh punishments, such as extrajudicial killing.
- Finally, it was observed that support must flow to communities and to victims who have suffered from terrorism. Programmes should not be limited to persons who have been a part of terrorist groups.

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, dear colleagues,

This is just a sample of the rich and nuanced perspectives shared by civil society.

We speak often about the benefits of a whole of society approach. Here we have an excellent opportunity to take advantage of their knowledge.

I would certainly commend the [full report](#) to you and urge consideration of the views contained therein.

Thank you.