

## **Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)**

The work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate (CTED) on countering violent extremism (CVE) has its origins in the mandate conferred by Security Council resolution 1624 (2005). In addition to calling upon States to prohibit and prevent incitement to commit acts of terrorism, the resolution encourages them to take steps “in accordance with all of their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, refugee law and humanitarian law”. The Committee and CTED have also consistently referred to resolution 1624 (2005) in urging States to criminalize incitement within a human rights framework and to develop comprehensive strategies to counter incitement, including in partnership with relevant non-governmental actors such as civil society and community and religious leaders.

In its resolution 2178 (2014), the Security Council states that CVE is an “essential element” of addressing the threat to international peace and security posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). The resolution also encourages States to engage relevant local communities and non-governmental actors in developing strategies to counter the violent extremism narrative that can incite terrorist acts and to address the conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, including by empowering youth, families, women, religious, cultural and education leaders, and all other concerned groups of civil society. Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) requires the Committee, within its existing mandate and with the support of CTED, to identify principal gaps in States’ capacities to implement resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005) that may hinder their abilities to stem the flow of FTFs, as well as to identify good practices to stem the flow of FTFs in the implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005).

Since 2010, CTED has facilitated and organized a series of workshops and meetings on effective ways to counter incitement through law enforcement approaches as well as approaches emphasizing participation and inclusion of all concerned actors. Since the adoption of resolution 2178 (2014), these events have also focused on countering violent extremism. Co-organized with the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism-The Hague (ICCT) and the Human Security Collective, they have been held in various regions of the world — including Central Asia, North and East Africa, and the Middle East — and have brought together Governments and non-governmental actors to identify ways to counter the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism.

In accordance with resolutions 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014), these events have emphasized that, in order to be effective, CVE strategies must include respect for human rights. Security Council resolution 2178 (2014) notes that States’ failure to comply with all of their obligations under international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, is among the factors that contribute to increased radicalization and also fosters a sense of impunity. CTED has found that, by bringing different actors together and identifying a shared commitment to preventing violent extremism, it has also been possible to address human rights concerns that can detract from Government’s efforts in this area and possibly lead to increased radicalization.

For example, participants in the CTED workshops events have discussed the counter-productive impact of measures that disproportionately target certain communities and fail to comply with human rights obligations regarding fair treatment and personal security. They have also

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recognized that policies and practices that violate human rights can be a factor in marginalizing some persons and possibly even pushing them in the direction of radicalization that can lead to terrorism. It has become evident, through these interactions, that policies need to be revised, and remedial measures taken.

In July 2015, the Committee held a special meeting on “Stemming the Flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters”, hosted by the Government of Spain, in Madrid. One of the meeting’s working sessions focused on the theme of “prevention”. The participants (including Governments, civil society organizations, and representatives of international organizations) described practical experiences in working with communities and promoting dialogue, highlighting how respect for human dignity can have a positive effect on people’s views and hopes. The special meeting also highlighted the link between addressing conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and preventing violent extremism. Speakers described initiatives to promote economic and social rights, including the right to education, which had shown positive effects in marginalized communities. Attention was also paid to human rights-based counter-messaging that could help blunt the messages of extremists and prevent recruitment. The practices discussed at the special meeting were captured in the “Guiding principles for stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters in accordance with Security Council resolution 2178 (2014)”, which are a useful reference source for good practices in the field of CVE.

In September 2015, the Committee held an open briefing on “The Role of Women in Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism”, during which women’s activists from three regions affected by terrorism and violent extremism (the Middle East, East Africa and West Africa) shared their experiences and views. It was noted that, despite the growing awareness of women’s participation in terrorism and violent extremism (including as suicide bombers), the potential for women to act as a vital resource in policy and planning on CVE remained largely untapped. Through their influence on the family, community and Government, women can play a positive and proactive role as agents of change to build resilience to radicalization to violence and conflict. Their inclusion is therefore an indispensable component of any comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy.

In December 2015, the Committee, with the support of CTED, held a special meeting on “Preventing Terrorists from Exploiting the Internet and Social Media to Recruit Terrorists and Incite Terrorist Acts, While Respecting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”, which underlined the need to promote dialogue and cooperation between the various stakeholders to collectively prevent and counter use of the Internet and communications technologies by terrorists and their supporters. It was stressed that counter-messaging by the private sector and civil society was often more localized and customized, and might therefore resonate more closely with the targeted communities. Within the framework of the implementation of resolutions 1373 (2001), 1624 (2005) and 2178 (2014), CTED is committed to improving cooperation between Government, the private sector and civil society with a view to preventing and combating the use of cyberspace by terrorists in a fully human rights compliant fashion.

The Committee’s updated “Global Implementation Survey” (GIS) of Member States’ implementation of resolution 1624 (2005) (S/2016/50), issued in January 2016, notes that, as an offence based upon acts of expression, rather than a violent act, per se, incitement presents an

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unusual challenge for States, and its prohibition must be handled with care. Different approaches taken by States to criminalize incitement (some of which raise human rights issues) have undermined international efforts to bring persons accused of incitement to justice. To remedy this situation, States should review the ways in which they criminalize incitement and seek to harmonize their measures with those of other States, ensuring that such measures also comply with international human rights obligations. In particular, States should ensure that incitement offences are defined clearly and narrowly, so as not to include within their scope forms of expression that may be protected by international human rights law.

The GIS further reflected on progress made by Member States vis-à-vis, inter alia, countering incitement to terrorism through engagement with local communities and civil society, developing the right approach in countering terrorist narratives, and preventing the subversion of educational, cultural and religious institutions by terrorists and their supporters via, inter alia, the voices of victims, religious leaders, women and youth. In taking relevant actions, States should proceed cautiously, since repressive actions targeting matters of expression, association, faith and conscience might infringe on the exercise of human rights. In its communications with States on the implementation of the resolution, CTED draws attention to all these issues, as appropriate, and urges States to discuss them with United Nations human rights mechanisms and other human rights bodies.