



Tenth United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Compact Coordination Committee Meeting
Strategic Coordination of Counter-Terrorism Initiatives in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities
24-25 January 2024

Remarks of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Ben SAUL

Good morning Excellencies and Distinguished Participants,

I echo the call by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to place human rights at the heart of United Nations counter-terrorism coordination in Africa.

Firstly, the United Nations must intensify its work with African states and regional organisations to prevent and remedy state violations of human rights that are conditions conducive to terrorism. Such violations regrettably include the abuse of counter-terrorism measures themselves, thus aggravating, rather than resolving, terrorism.

Secondly, the United Nations should insist that national and regional counter-terrorism measures comply with international and regional human rights standards, and ensure that its own technical activities do not undermine human rights. This includes in areas such as the definition of terrorism, criminal justice, countering terrorist financing, border management, administrative measures, national and regional strategies, and efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism. The United Nations must also ensure respect for international humanitarian law in military operations in Africa to counter terrorism.

Thirdly, the United Nations should promote accountability for violations of human rights when countering terrorism, by strengthening African regional human rights mechanisms, African engagement with international human rights procedures, the non-discriminatory protection of all victims of terrorism, and safe space for African civil society.

Finally, the United Nations must adequately resource human rights in counter-terrorism, the serious under-funding of which signals that, despite all of our rhetoric, human rights are currently not treated as priorities in practice.

Thank you.