

7TH BIENNIAL
REVIEW OF THE
GLOBAL COUNTER-
TERRORISM STRATEGY

Priorities for the Promotion & Protection of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism

Background

As the 7th Review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS) ([A/RES/72/284](#)) approaches, there remains a pressing need to redouble efforts and reaffirm commitments to the full promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms across all efforts to counter-terrorism and prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Since the previous biennial review in 2018, diverse stakeholders have stressed that the Fourth Pillar suffers from profound structural and policy weaknesses. In his recent report to the General Assembly ([A/75/729](#)), the Secretary-General underscored that "an urgent focus [...] was needed, supported by renewed political commitment and adequate resources, to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law in the implementation of all four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy." It has become more apparent than ever that acute institutional and resource inequities leave the human rights mainstreaming capabilities of the United Nations stagnant. Moreover, amidst this lack of resources, the gaps and lack of human rights in conceptualization, framing, program establishment, and human rights impact assessment continue to grow. This is despite evidence that demonstrates that although [conflict is one of strongest predictors of the impact of terrorism, so too are deficiencies in human rights protections, socioeconomic factors related to disenfranchisement, deficient rule of law and equality, and more.](#)

As Member States, the United Nations and civil society come together to collectively reflect on the review of the Strategy, the Special Rapporteur has prepared a number of resources to help frame the collective progress and challenges, including [Trends & Data: Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism](#) and [Priorities for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism](#). The Special Rapporteur encourages Member States to place human rights and rule of law at the forefront of these efforts, premised on the fundamental idea that security without rights is meaningless, and that rights inherently protect and advance security. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur has also produced [Technical Recommendations](#) for the United Nations and Member States.

Key Priorities

Priority 1: Advancing the Meaningful Participation of Civil Society in Counter-terrorism and an Enabling Rights Environment

Since the mandate's inception in 2005, "66 per cent of all relevant communications sent by the mandate holders have related to the use on civil society of counter-terrorism laws and policies and prevention and countering of violent extremism or broadly defined security-related measures." Ensuring the meaningful participation of independent civil society can only succeed through regular engagement and adoption of measures that protect the work and rights of civil society at all levels. The mandate emphasizes that concrete pathways for engagement should be integrated within the Global Compact to enable regular and meaningful participation of civil society within the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture.

Priority 2: Mainstreaming Human Rights through Tailored Tools for Measurement and Investment & Increased Implementation of Pillar IV

The realization of human rights mainstreaming goals across the GCTS requires a careful analysis of the existing resource constraints and inequalities for human rights within the existing U.N. counter-terrorism architecture. The realization of a stronger and balanced Pillar IV, along with mainstreaming throughout Pillars, will require assigning requisite resources. The Mandate emphasizes that this remains one of many steps towards improving the possibility for independent human rights impact assessments, adherence to the U.N. Due Diligence Policy and greater independent human rights oversight.

Priority 3: Preventing the Misuse and Abuse of Counter-Terrorism Measures and Exceptional Powers

The Mandate has continued to emphasize that values-based approaches to counter-terrorism, rooted in the respect for human rights and international law, are the approaches that yield long-term results for peaceful, secure and equal societies. The General Assembly has continued to acknowledge that it is not through security solutions that the challenge of terrorism will be addressed, but through long-term investments in development and building peaceful, resilient, and equal communities. The Mandate emphasizes the importance of reaffirming these commitments to human rights for all Member States.

Key Priorities

Priority 4: Ensuring Full Protection for the Rights of Victims of Terrorism

Recognizing the significant steps that have been taken to bring greater attention to the experiences and needs of victims of terrorism, including the Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism and the establishment of a Group of Friends for Victims of Terrorism, the mandate encourages Member States to consolidate these efforts to advance meaningful legal protections for victims of terrorism at the country level. The mandate supports strengthening the rights of victims in line with the commitments of States articulated in General Assembly resolution 73/305 (A/RES/73/305). Among the most important priorities included finding practical ways to support States particularly adversely affected by terrorism to provide medical, legal and psycho-social support to victims and emphasizing the required gender specific approaches to address the needs of women and girls who are victims.

Priority 5: Gender and Women's Rights in the Context of Countering Terrorism and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

Entrenched inequality and structural discrimination in many societies continue to affect the realization of the rights of women and girls impacted by terrorism and counter-terrorism or P/CVE measures. This extends across issues such as sanctions, detention, citizenship deprivation, return and repatriation, the role of family law and family courts, and challenges faced by women human rights defenders from P/CVE policies and practices. Gender mainstreaming must therefore be rooted in human rights and gender equality elevating the rights of, and remedies due to, women and girls, without discrimination. The mandate emphasizes the need to engage UN Women on the institutional and programmatic necessities for ensuring long-term, meaningful gender mainstreaming, for which their mandate and expertise has supported throughout the United Nations infrastructure.

Priority 6: Emerging Technologies and Counter-Terrorism

The mandate has articulated the impact of emerging and new technologies on human rights, including detailed reporting on biometrics. As the use of new, emerging, and even well established technologies continues, it is imperative to ensure the protection and promotion of the right to privacy and data protection. It is also critical to address the ramifications for a broad range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, noting the "indivisible and interdependent character of all human rights." The mandate encourages Member States to recall the international human rights framework governing obligations on collection, retention, processing and sharing of biometric and other data and to enhance implementation, such as human rights impact assessments, meaningful monitoring and evaluation of ways in which human rights are affected by relevant laws, policies, and practices, and increasing effective independent oversight.

Reports of the Special Rapporteur

- **Gender & Women's Rights:**
Human Rights Impact of CT & CVE on the Rights of Women, Girls and Family (A/HRC/46/36)
- **Human Rights & P/CVE:**
Human Rights Impact of Policies and Practices Aimed at P/CVE (A/HRC/43/46)
- **Impact of CT & P/CVE on Civil Society & Civic Space:**
Role of Measures to Address Terrorism and Violent Extremism on Closing Civic Space and Violating the Rights of Civil Society Actors and Human Rights Defenders (A/HRC/40/52)
- **Emergency Powers:**
Human Rights Challenge of States of Emergency in the Context of Countering Terrorism (A/HRC/37/52)
- **International Human Rights & Humanitarian Law & CT:**
Advancing Human Rights through the Positive Interface of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law in the Context of Counter-Terrorism (A/75/337)
- **Soft Law:**
Report on the Role of Soft Law on Counter-Terrorism Measures and Human Rights (A/74/335)
- **Biometrics:**
Use of Biometric Data to Identify Terrorists: Best Practice or Risky Business?

Contact Details

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