



Forum: 4th Committee (Political)

Issue: Countering violent religious extremism

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the world has witnessed a constant increase in the number of victims of violent religious extremism movements.

While violent extremism requires intervention to protect safety of people and property, preventing violent extremism must go beyond strict security considerations and address developmental causes and solutions to the phenomenon. Experience in both development and peacebuilding shows that increased levels of integration and tolerance in communities can lead both to better management of diversity and to societies that are more immune to violent extremism.

Tolerance and intercultural understanding are also at the heart of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG) on building peaceful, just and strong institutions.

Definition of key words

Religious extremism – a kind of extremism that is based on a certain religious ideology and activities inherent in individuals belonging to various religious groups and movements that are distinguished by them seek to enter into irreconcilable confrontation with existing religious traditions in order to radically change or destroy them.

PVE – abbreviation of preventing violent extremism.

Terrorism – in the broadest sense, the use of intentional violence for political or religious purposes.

Tolerance - sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own.

Background information

There has been more than a nine-fold increase in the number of deaths from violent extremism and terrorism, from 3,329 in 2000 to 32,685 in 2014. 2015 saw a decline but with 29,376 deaths it was still the second deadliest year on record. OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries however saw an increase in terrorist related deaths from 77 in 2014 to 577 in 2015. 2015 was also the deadliest year for the Taliban in Afghanistan (both terrorist deaths and battle field deaths).

Five countries — Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria - accounted for 72 per cent of the lives lost in 2015. But violent extremism is spreading: the number of countries experiencing more than 500 deaths has increased from 5 to 11 during 2014, a 120 per cent increase from 2013. The six new countries with over 500 deaths are Somalia, Ukraine, Yemen, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Cameroon. Globally, the list of attacks conducted by violent extremists is increasing. Still, while numerous events captured international attention, most of the daily victims of violent extremism – in countries in the Arab States, Africa, Central Europe and Asia – stay unnoticed.

For a full understanding of the problem of religious extremism, its causes, as well as further understanding of the ways to solve this issue, it is worth familiarizing yourself with the background information.

1. The origins, causes and drivers of religious extremism

Many sociologists from all over the world consider religious extremism emerging as a tendency expressing the negative reaction of some conservative religious groups (XIX-XX centuries) to secularization. In other words, the emancipation of science, culture, and social life from religion, caused the marginalization of the conservative religious groups that, in fact, very often become the opposite of modern life, where the role of religion is decreasing.

Today this concept has a broader meaning, since religious extremism is understood as a stable religious attitude or one of the types of modern religious

consciousness, characteristic primarily of the so-called Abrahamic religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, but also having parallels and similarities in Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism.

On other hand, the root causes of violent extremism are complex, multifaceted, and intertwined, and relate to the structural environment in which radicalization is easily developing. Religious extremism can have intellectual, political, psychological, religious, social, and political reasons.

Moreover, the reasons for the development and spread of religious extremism can lie in a certain person, in one's relationships with family members, relatives, or can be found in the contradictions between the inner world of the extremist and the surrounding society, between faith and behavior, ideals and reality, religion and politics, words and actions, dreams and actual achievements, secular and divine.

In addition, the reasons for religious extremism can be the lack of full knowledge of the goals and essence of religion itself, a correct understanding of its internal system and goals, fanatical intolerance and cruelty, which make the extremist blindly follow exclusively his own prejudices and do not allow taking into account the interests of the people around him and objective circumstances, the desire for prohibitions and restrictions, ostentatious and constant excessiveness in religious behavior and the tendency to force others to do the same.

From all that was mentioned above, it is possible to outline the following reasons for the emergence of violent religious extremism (but not limited to):

- Social and economic crises;
- Destruction of political system structures;
- Deteriorating living standards of the population;
- Suppression by the authorities of dissent and opposition, national oppression;
- The desire of leaders of political parties and religious groups to accelerate the implementation of their goals.

2. From radicalization to violent extremism

In addition to these structural drivers, people get pulled into radical and violent movements through well considered manipulation and accompaniment (socialization) processes, often facilitated by personal, emotional, or psychological factors, such as alienation, a search for identity and dignity, revenge for previous

mistreatment, breakdown of communication between authority figures and youth, as well as through virtual communities on social media. Preventing people from joining violent extremist groups thus requires deeper analysis and reflection on the foundations of the social fabric of countries at risk.

3. The most well-known terrorist attacks as a manifestation of religious extremism

The danger of religious extremism became especially serious at the turn of the XXth century. Probably, the most tragic and well-known terrorist attack is the one that happened on September 11, 2001, in New-York. Terroristic group captured an airplane and led it to the two skyscrapers of the World Trade Center. As a result of this attack, about 3000 civilians were killed. After the attack governments in different countries started to address the issue of terrorism more seriously, developing strict security measures, especially for air travel.

Another tragic attack happed in London in 2005, when four terrorists separately detonated three homemade bombs in quick succession aboard London Underground trains across the city and, later, a fourth on a double-decker bus in Tavistock Square. The attack happened during morning rush hour. As a result of this attack, 52 UK residents were killed and more than 700 wounded, making it the UK's deadliest terrorist incident since the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 near Lockerbie, Scotland, and England's deadliest since World War II, as well as the country's first Islamist suicide attack. Two videotapes with terrorist describing their reasons for becoming what they called 'soldiers' show religious motifs that led to the attack.

During the last decades several religious terrorist attacks happed in Europe, one of the most well-known of them being related to French magazine Charlie Hebdo - a French satirical weekly newspaper with a history of attracting controversies (for example, for depicting prophet Mohammad – the action prohibited in Islam). Hatred for Charlie Hebdo's cartoons, which made jokes about Islamic leaders as well as Muhammad, is considered to be the principal motive for the massacre that happened on January 7, 2015, when two masked gunmen attacked the headquarters of the magazine, killing 12 people and injuring 11. This attack is only one example of numerous act of religious terrorism that happed in Europe because of the tension between freedom of speech (i.e. religious jokes) and the position of radical religious groups.

Major countries and organizations involved

Organizations

- **OSCE** (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) – with 56 States from Europe, Central Asia and North America, the OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization. It offers a forum for political negotiations and decision-making in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, and puts the political will of its participating States into practice through its unique network of field missions
- **INTERPOL** – the world's largest international police organization, with 190 member countries. Their role is to enable police around the world to work together to make the world a safer place. High-tech infrastructure of technical and operational support helps meet the growing challenges of fighting crime in the 21st century.
- **UN CTC** – Guided by Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005), the CTC works to bolster the ability of United Nations Member States to prevent terrorist acts both within their borders and across regions. It was established in the wake of the 11 September terrorist attacks in the United States.
- **ICCT** (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism) aims to translate its research and analysis findings into practical, solutions-oriented policy recommendations that support policymakers and practitioners in their daily work. Building on its growing expertise in these areas, ICCT aims to contribute to the design and implementation of comprehensive and more systemic global, regional and national counter-terrorism strategies and activities.
- **Al-Qaeda** is a militant Sunni Islamist multi-national organization founded in 1988 by Osama bin Laden, Abdullah Azzam, and several other Arab volunteers during the Soviet–Afghan War. Al-Qaeda operates as a network of Islamic extremists and Salafist jihadists.

- **The Egyptian Islamic Jihad.** It is under worldwide embargo by the United Nations as an affiliate of Al-Qaeda. It is also banned by several individual governments worldwide. The group is a Proscribed Organization in the United Kingdom under the Terrorism Act 2000.

Relevant treaties and the UN Resolutions

Combatting religious intolerance (resolution 16/18)

The main UN global policy framework for combatting religious intolerance, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief is set down in Council resolution 16/18. Resolution 16/18 was adopted by consensus in March 2011, and hailed by stakeholders from all regions and faiths as a turning point in international efforts to confront religious intolerance. After more than five decades of failure, UN member states had, it was hoped, at last come together to agree a common, consensus-based approach and practical plan of action

UN Security Council Resolution 2462

Resolution 2462 (2019) calls upon UN Member States to combat and criminalize the financing of terrorists and their activities, reaffirms principles contained in UNSCR 1373 (2001) and urges all Member States to implement FATF Standards.

The Resolution not only recognizes the role FIUs play in the global effort to deny terrorists the space to exploit, raise and move funds; it also echoes the work and principles of the Egmont Group (EG) regarding international cooperation, effective partnership and collaboration between competent authorities.

Possible solutions

- Promoting a rule of law and human rights-based approach to PVE;
- Enhancing the fight against corruption;
- Enhancing participatory decision-making and increasing civic space at national and local levels;
- Providing effective socio-economic alternatives to violence for groups at risk;

- Strengthening the capacity of local governments for service delivery and security;
- Supporting credible internal intermediaries to promote dialogue with alienated groups and reintegration of former extremists;
- Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment;
- Engaging youth in building social cohesion;
- Working with faith-based organizations and religious leaders to counter the abuse of religion by violent extremists;
- Working with the media to promote human rights and tolerance;
- Addressing the issue of tension between freedom of speech and religious insult;
- Promoting respect for human rights, diversity, and a culture of global citizenship in schools and universities

Useful links

<https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/focus-areas/countering-violent-extremism/>

https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/the_globalisation_of_countering_violent_extremism_policies.pdf

<file:///D:/%D1%83%D1%87%D1%91%D0%B1%D0%B0/MUN/Discussion%20Paper%20-%20Preventing%20Violent%20Extremism%20by%20Promoting%20Inclusive%20%20Development.pdf>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7_July_2005_London_bombings

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie_Hebdo_shooting

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks