



VIRTUAL DIALOGUE WITH  
**HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERS ON BUILDING  
A BETTER PARADIGM TO PREVENT AND COUNTER TERRORISM**

..... 25-26 MAY 2021 .....

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Respect for human rights and the rule of law are central to fighting terrorism effectively**

**New York, 26 May 2021** – The two-day [Virtual Dialogue with Human Rights and Civil Society Partners on Building a Better Paradigm to Prevent and Counter Terrorism](#), co-organized by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Permanent Mission of Spain to the United Nations concluded today. The Dialogue opened with remarks from United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism Vladimir Voronkov, Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs Arancha González Laya and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet. H.E. Mr. Agustín Santos Maraver, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and Mr. Francisco de la Torre, Mayor of Malaga, Spain participated in the closing session.

The two-day virtual event [brought together](#) Member States, UN entities, human rights representatives, women-led groups, youth and civil society actors, a victim of terrorism, as well as experts and other stakeholders for a practical exchange of views on how to address terrorism and violent extremism while safeguarding and promoting human rights, in particular the rights of women, children and victims of terrorism.

Terrorist groups continue to commit the most egregious human rights abuses, propagate hatred and incite violence. At the same time, if Member States violate human rights in the name of counter-terrorism, they can play straight into the narratives and recruitment tactics of terrorists.

The Dialogue aimed to elevate and profile the role that human rights defenders and civil society actors, including women-led organizations, play at a time when COVID-19 is exacerbating the fault-lines that terrorists seek to exploit, including socio-economic inequalities, governance challenges, political disenfranchisement, gender inequality and discrimination, human rights violations, and the misuse of new technologies.

The Dialogue paid tribute to victims of terrorism and advocated for enhanced international cooperation on and support to victims and survivors of terrorism. Launched on 26 May, the documentary [VictimA - Victims of Terrorism: Voices of Women from Spain](#) portrays the voices of five women victims spanning several decades of terrorist acts in Spain. The film seeks to explore how these acts have impacted the lives of the women and how they became agents of change.

This event supports the United Nations Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights and is part of the efforts of UNOCT to facilitate the active, inclusive and meaningful participation and contribution of civil society in its activities.

This Dialogue is a prelude to the First Global Congress for Victims of Terrorism that the United Nations will convene later this year and the high-level, in-person international conference on Human Rights, Civil Society and Counter-Terrorism that UNOCT will organize jointly with the Government of Spain in early 2022 in Málaga. It also contributed to exchanging ideas and providing inputs in the context of the seventh [review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the General Assembly](#) (June 2021), co-facilitated by the Permanent Representatives of Oman and Spain to the United Nations.

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## QUOTES - OPENING SESSION ([programme](#))

**Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, UNOCT** ([statement](#))

“Upholding human rights and the rule of law is not only a matter of moral commitment to the principles and values of the United Nations Charter and an obligation under international law. It is a prerequisite for the strategic, operational effectiveness and sustainability of counter-terrorism efforts.”

“Civil society actors have a critical role to play in the complex efforts to prevent and counter terrorism. This role can and needs to be further encouraged and supported as part of a whole-of-society approach”.

**H.E. Ms. Arancha González Laya, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain**

“Terrorism is a global phenomenon that requires a transnational response, hence international cooperation is key. Spain places a particular importance to promoting human rights, as well as to the role that civil society plays in building a new and better paradigm to prevent and counter terrorism.”

“Upholding human rights is both a legal and a moral obligation, and it improves operational effectiveness. In the fight against terrorism, its gender dimension needs to be considered. Women and girls are not only victims, but also lead agents in the prevention, fight and reconstruction of the public space”

“Victims of terrorism should be at the center of counter terrorism, to ensure the acknowledgment of their dignity and their memory, striving against oblivion and guaranteeing their protection”.

**Ms. Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights** ([statement](#))

“My perspective is clear. I am convinced that responses to terrorism should be grounded in human rights and the rule of law, because this is the right thing to do, and because ultimately, it is the most effective approach. The lesson of the last two decades is that crackdowns, oppression and militarized responses not only don't work, they are counterproductive. Effective counter-terrorism strategies must be based on laws, uphold human rights and ensure that people are held accountable for any violation of human rights.”-

**Delivered by Ambassador Osman Khamara on behalf of H.E. Mr. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, African Union**

“There is need to adopt an integrated, coordinated, multifaceted and long-term approach, one which addresses human rights, as well as the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism in our domain.”

**H.E. Ms. Ylva Johansson, Commissioner for Home Affairs, European Union** ([statement](#))

**Ms. Åsa Regnér, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director, UNWomen** (TBC)

**Mr. Eelco Kessels, Executive Director, Global Center on Cooperative Security** ([statement](#))

Civil society will continue to work tirelessly to prevent violent extremism, self-organize to have its voices heard, and hold those in power accountable. Governments and multilateral organizations need to put in place the modalities and resources to establish and sustain meaningful partnerships with a diverse range of nongovernmental stakeholders.

**Ms. Katerina Hadzi-Miceva Evans, Executive Director, European Center For-Not-For Profit Law ([Statement](#))**

"We need to replace the 'prevention of undefined threats' with evidence-based counter-terrorism approaches; better integrate UN counterterrorism work in the UN's broader mission and goals; make human rights and gender an objective of the effort and introduce an oversight. And all of these must be achieved through a broad participatory and inclusive approach – which enables and protects civic space."

## QUOTES – CLOSING SESSION 26 May

**Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, UNOCT ([Statement](#))**

"We need not only to sustain but transform into action the strong international commitment and momentum to enhance international cooperation on and support to victims and survivors of terrorism. The VictimA documentary is yet another powerful example of their resilience and incredible courage in the face of adversity. It sheds light on the gendered dimensions of the experience of victims – too often overlooked – and the need to empower women victims as agents of change."

**H.E. Mr. Agustín Santos, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Spain to the UN ([Statement](#))**

"The prevention and fight against terrorism is a priority for Spain, by improving the existing paradigm: deepening the human rights perspective and strengthening the role of civil society. In particular, the role of civil society organizations in Spain has been key in the assistance of victims of terrorism."

"Spain cofacilitates with Oman the Seventh review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. I hope that its final outcome will show the evolution of counter terrorism in the United Nations in the last three years, by strengthening our agreement on how to counter and prevent terrorism, adjusting it to new circumstances and menaces; advancing in the upholding of human rights and increasing the role played by civil society; and by consolidating the existing UN institutional architecture, including UNOCT."

**Francisco de la Torre, Mayor of Málaga (Statement)**

"Málaga is looking forward to hosting the United Nations Regional Conference on Human Rights and Civil Society that will take place in 2022. We will warmly welcome all participants to continue these important discussions."

**H.E. Mr. Mohamed Al Hassan, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, New York ([Statement](#))**

"We all know, from experts and various studies, that there are causes for terrorism, among which poverty, lack of hope, foreign domination, and, at times, state actions. We ought to look at these causes. States and government need to walk the talk. We all can do better in this global fight against terrorism, because not doing so is riskier."

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit: [www.un.org/counterterrorism/events/virtual-dialogue-human-rights-cso](http://www.un.org/counterterrorism/events/virtual-dialogue-human-rights-cso)
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