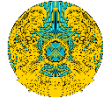




2021 Counter-Terrorism Week SIDE EVENT



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Press release

Life After ISIS:

Returning individuals with links to terrorist groups from Syria and Iraq and the UN support available to Member States through the Global Framework

New York, 24 June 2021 – The United States, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) jointly convened a side event entitled *Life After ISIS: Returning individuals with links to terrorist groups from Syria and Iraq and the UN support available to Member States through the Global Framework* on the margins of the 2021 Counter-Terrorism Week. The event highlighted key considerations for Member States and the international community to respond to the multifaceted challenges related to the protection, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees from Syria and Iraq.

Following the territorial defeat of ISIS, thousands of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and tens of thousands of their family members remain confined in Iraq and northeast Syria. The majority of those left behind are women and children, facing deteriorating humanitarian conditions and increasing violence in displacement camps such as Al-Hol and Al-Roj. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant new challenges and has exacerbated the poor humanitarian, human rights and security conditions in camps and places of detention across northeastern Syria and Iraq.

To support Member States faced with the return of their nationals from Syria and Iraq, UNOCT/UNCCT in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) developed and are implementing a Global Framework with 13 other UN entities, which provides a coordinated “all-of-UN” approach, to enable human rights based, gender- and age-sensitive support.

This virtual event was attended by Member States, international and regional organizations, United Nations Resident Coordinators, United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities and civil society organizations.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, highlighted that “In addition to the serious humanitarian and human rights concerns that should guide our decisions to return foreign nationals from Syria and Iraq, the international community is facing serious security implications and accountability gaps.”

“The United Nations stands ready to support Member States in taking effective action to address this serious humanitarian and security challenge”, he added.

The event also featured a short clip from a documentary entitled “*The Return: Life After ISIS*”, which portrays family members of FTFs who remain in the Al-Roj camp in Syria. Film Director Alba Sotorra



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discussed the making of the film, her first-hand impressions of the camps, and her interactions with the women and children who live there. During the panel discussion, representatives from Member States, United Nations Resident Coordinators and UN agencies, including OHCHR and UN Women, discussed their experience in implementing the Global Framework as well as key considerations for Member States and the international community to meet the challenges at hand and to ensure the protection, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees.

The event offered a platform enabling policymakers, UN entities and civil society to exchange ideas, including on existing policy, legal frameworks, good practices, key challenges, lessons learned, and the way forward. The discussion and the documentary highlighted the urgency with which to address the situation of third country nationals with links to terrorist groups who remain stranded in Syria and Iraq and demonstrated tangibly how the Global Framework can support Member States.

The Global Framework

In August 2020, UNOCT in partnership with UNICEF developed the Global Framework, which provides an “all-of-UN” response to the situation of individuals returning from Syria and Iraq, combining human rights based, age-appropriate, and gender-responsive approaches to address the differentiated needs of men, women, boys and girls. The Global Framework works across two distinct yet complementary pillars, the recovery and development pillar, coordinated by UNICEF, and the security and accountability pillar, coordinated by UNOCT. Currently, the Global Framework is supported by generous contributions from the European Union, the United States and the Netherlands. To enable implementation of the Global Framework in priority countries, contributions are welcomed both individually and through a multi-partner trust fund.

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS

Mr. Raffi Gregorian, Director and Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism

“Helping Member States deal with the multidimensional challenges related to the return of third country nationals from Syria and Iraq remains a top priority for the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.”

Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

“All participating entities have recognized the need for the [Global] Framework to be firmly anchored in human rights principles. Under the [Global] Framework, support provided by the UN is thus based on human rights and backed by an offer of technical human rights capacity-building —an approach that we encourage across all UN counter-terrorism programming.”

Ms. Helena Fraser, United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Republic of Uzbekistan

“It is clear that Uzbekistan has committed significant resources to the repatriation and reintegration of these families, taking its international commitments seriously. It is fitting that the international community in turn is providing targeted support through the UN family. In this way, we believe Uzbekistan’s experience can be a flagship example of the UN Global Framework, in action.”



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Mr. Cornelius Williams, Associate Director, Child Protection, Programme Division, UNICEF

"The Global Framework relies on the complementary frameworks represented by the diversity of expertise in the UN family, as may be needed or required. By relying on these diverse experiences and tools, the UN can support governments both to protect and address the needs of returnee victims, including children, and to promote security and accountability."

Ms. Sarah Douglas, Deputy Chief, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Section, UN Women

"It is clear that many women in the camps do not fit into a neat binary distinction between victim and perpetrator. Many may have been coerced, tricked or abducted. Some joined as minors and then became adults while with the groups. Many have had children during their time with the group, meaning they are already balancing roles as caregivers and struggling to take care of their children. Regardless of the circumstances of each individual, a strong, gender-sensitive analysis is needed to screen the women properly as suspected perpetrators and potential survivors of violence and trauma."

For more information:

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- Contacts of the press officers of the main partners

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