



**UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM**

**Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General
United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**Engagement of Civil Society Organizations in the Management of Violent Extremist
Prisoners and Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons**

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12:30 PM -2:00 PM

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

I would like to warmly thank our partners, the European Union, the Netherlands, Tunisia, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) for hosting this timely discussion on the engagement of civil society in managing violent extremist prisoners.

The number of violent extremist prisoners is rising across the globe as Member States strengthen their criminal justice response. And unfortunately more people are falling prey to radicalization and recruitment to violence.

This presents Member States with complex questions.

How to manage these inmates as they serve their sentence, while making sure they don't pose a threat once they are released?

And how to prevent prisons from becoming hotspots for further terrorist radicalization?

To support Member States in addressing these challenges, UNOCT, together with its partners, launched a four-year pilot project with generous support from the European Union, the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia, focusing on two aspects:

First, sharing of good practices and lessons learned to address security concerns and needs related to the management of violent extremist prisoners.

And, second, highlighting the importance of community-based strategies in preventing violent extremism and facilitating rehabilitation.

The lessons learned of this project remind us that the prevention of violent extremism cannot be successful without whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches. Prison officers alone cannot tackle the challenges.

Civil society actors can play key roles to ensure an effective, human rights based, gender- and age-sensitive approach in support of these objectives.

Under the right conditions, facilitating access to prisons for civil society actors can ensure relevant, credible and trusted expertise and support to prisoners on their journeys away from violent extremism.

It can also help to establish transparency and foster public trust in receiving communities. This is the essential basis for any reintegration programme.

But to optimize the involvement of civil society actors, a solid and sustainable framework is needed, including legislation, oversight, training, and resources.

Thank you for actively share your experiences and insights today on the contributions and optimal conditions for civil society to support prison-based prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration.

I wish you productive discussions.