



## UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM

**Remarks by Mr. Raffi Gregorian  
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United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism**

**"Commemoration event on occasion of the 8th Anniversary of the Victims of the terrorist  
attack on Army Public School in Peshawar, Pakistan"**

**16 December 2022**

Your Excellency, Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Foreign Minister of Pakistan,

Your Excellency, Mr. Munir Akram, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the  
Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the United Nations,

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am both humbled and honoured to take part in this commemorative event in  
remembrance of the victims and survivors of the terrorist attack on the Army Public School  
in Peshawar, Pakistan.

As an American, I am sadly all too familiar with the horror of children being killed in schools.  
Two days ago we marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sandy Hook massacre, in which 20 six-  
and seven-year-olds were gunned down in their class rooms along with six of their teachers.  
I remember the powerful mixture of anger and bottomless sadness.

Two years and two days later, an even more horrifying—indeed, *unimaginable*—massacre  
took place at the Army Public School in Peshawar in which the children victims were counted  
in the *triple digits*. The attack shocked the conscience of the world. But as a father and a  
former military officer, the deliberate mass murder of children of service members  
resonated deeply with me personally.

Nothing in this world is more reprehensible, heinous, or unjustifiable than violence against  
children. The Holy Quran makes clear that a person who slays the soul of an innocent "shall  
be as if he had slain all mankind." And that's what the murder of school children feels like.

Eight years later, I understand that for many of the families and survivors of the attack, the  
pain and sorrow of this despicable act of mass violence

continues to ripple outward like never-ending waves of grief. I hope you learn to carry it lightly.

There is no justification for attacking defenseless children while they learn.

As the Secretary-General said in response to the attack, (quote) “going to school should not have to be an act of bravery” (unquote). Schools must be safe and secure learning spaces.

Today’s commemorative event reminds us that no matter how long ago an attack occurred, victims continue to live and cope with its legacy. Their need to be heard and to memorialize their losses will likely never fade.

The United Nations stands in solidarity with the victims, survivors and their families, whose lives and futures were changed forever on that day.

Their courage and resilience are an inspiring example. I hope for all of us

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live and work in an increasingly interconnected world, and terror attacks can impact anyone anywhere. Cross-border victims also face additional challenges. It thus remains vital that we strengthen international cooperation to ensure that all victims, everywhere, are protected and supported.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Protection of and support for victims of terrorism is, of course, the primary responsibility of Member States; it is a humanitarian and human rights imperative.

The United Nations has taken important steps over the last few years to support the needs and advance the rights of victims of terrorism: the establishment of the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism; the creation of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism; and the adoption of two milestone General Assembly resolutions dedicated to victims.

However, as recalled during the first United Nations Global Congress for Victims of Terrorism, organized by the UNOCT in September this year, more remains to be done.

First, we need to be more inclusive. We need to be better at putting victims first, giving them a voice and engaging with them and reflecting their concerns. In this regard, victims of terrorism and victims' associations must be included in all our efforts to counter-terrorism and prevent violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

Second, we must encourage existing national and regional systems to step up and play their vital role in helping victims of terrorism who require long-term support to recover and cope with the impact of terror attacks, including medical, financial, and psychosocial support.

Child and youth victims process their experience of terrorist acts differently to adults and are often among those most vulnerable to their effects. Children require specialized and age-appropriate support delivered with the best interests of the child as the primary consideration.

There is also a crucial need for specialised gender-sensitive services embedded in community, whilst providing protection, reparation, and access to justice for victims and survivors.

Third, we need to enshrine victims' rights in domestic legislation and develop national comprehensive assistance plans, as called for in General Assembly resolution 73/305.

In this regard, many Member States still need to establish and strengthen domestic legislative frameworks to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of victims at the national level for accountability and sustainability, in line with international standards and obligations, including international law.

The United Nations stands ready to assist requesting Member States in developing National Comprehensive Assistance Plans.

We are also ready to help strengthen and develop legislation on victims of terrorism, in line with the Model Legislative Provisions that were launched by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Inter-Parliamentary Union earlier this year.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

By reinforcing victims' resilience, showing solidarity, and providing support, we can contribute to rebuilding the fabric of communities torn apart by terrorism.

We also understand the power and strength of partnerships to sustain this effort. We know that to be effective in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism, the United Nations must work hand in hand with Member States and alongside partners, such as victims of terrorism, and other civil society organisations, academia and the private sector.

There are also strong synergies between the vision set out by the Secretary-General's report on *Our Common Agenda* and the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in particular to promote a people-centred approach with victims and survivors at its core. This report identifies terrorism as a strategic risk and requires our continued cooperation as part of a *New Agenda for Peace*.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

To all the victims, survivors, families, and friends present at this important commemorative event, today, the United Nations stands with you and resolves to not only work to defeat terrorism, but to also improve the situation for existing and future victims.

We must not falter in our efforts to support victims of terrorism. Not only is it a moral imperative but upholding their rights also builds strong, vibrant, and inclusive society, where people can live with dignity and hope for the future.

Thank you.