

**Commemoration of the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism
as and when Conducive to Terrorism
Monday 12 February 2024**

**UN Global Counter-Terrorism Compact PCVE Working Group, ‘Preventing Violent
Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism: From Programming to Real-World Impact’**

**Remarks of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection
of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Ben Saul**

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues,

It is my honour to join you to mark this important International Day.

From experience we know that violence thrives where there are deficits in human rights, good governance, the rule of law and accountability. Preventing the many stubborn conditions conducive to terrorism is vital for the United Nations to ensure peace, security and human rights.

My mandate has paid close attention to the human rights risks involved in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism (PCVE) by the United Nations, Member States, and other partners. Indeed, the inherently vague terminology of “violent extremism conducive to terrorism” has no foundation in international law and is regularly misused by States to criminalize the exercise of fundamental rights.

Over time my mandate has observed three further worrying trends:

- an encroachment of PCVE on peacemaking, peacebuilding and conflict prevention and resolution;
- a lack of qualitative evidence and evaluation to support the effectiveness of PCVE programming and its assumptions; and
- the instrumentalization of women as informants and as objects of intervention, rather than as rights-bearing individuals with agency.

The Global Compact’s own recent report, *Learn Better Together*, reinforces such concerns.

Without a decisive pivot, our efforts to prevent terrorism risk consolidating the past two decades of human rights deficient counter-terrorism practices under this problematic new narrative of “violent extremism” – compounding the troubling lack of definition of terrorism itself.

I urge Member States and the United Nations to address these defects, and in advance of the Summit of the Future, to genuinely recommit to a human rights-based approach to prevention.

Thank you.