



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism

#HRC58 • 11-12 March 2025



PRESENTATION OF THE THEMATIC REPORT

Mr. Ben SAUL, Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism

The thematic report presented by the SR focusses on the **protection of human rights by regional organisations while countering terrorism**. It is a sequel to his report on the same topic to the General Assembly last October, and the reports should be read together.

The counterterrorism activities of regional organisations have not received adequate scrutiny, despite their profound impacts on human rights and their growing importance as counterterrorism actors. Regional organisations should never undermine civil and political freedoms, impede economic and social rights, or amplify domestic repression. Instead, they should vigorously use their capacities and peer pressure to strengthen human rights amongst member states. This thematic report addresses **three key issues**.



First, the SR encourages regional organisations to more meaningfully **engage with diverse civil society organisations** (CSOs) on counterterrorism, addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism, and monitoring and remedying human rights violations. Engaging civil society enhances the transparency and legitimacy of counterterrorism measures, builds public confidence and security cooperation, and ultimately makes counterterrorism more effective. Some **key recommendations** on this front include, one, publicising accessible information about entry points and processes for engagement, two, avoiding unduly restrictive accreditation and registration criteria for civil society, three, providing adequate funding and administrative assistance to support engagement, and four, protecting against reprisals and intimidation for engaging with regional organisations. The SR also encourages the United Nations Counterterrorism Body to condition their cooperation with regional organisations on adequate civil society engagement in all programming.

Secondly, the SR's report cautions that the **use of regional sanctions** against individual terrorists or terrorist organisations must fully respect human rights law, given the acute risks of sanctions, of misuse against human rights defenders, civil society, journalists, and political activists. Regional definitions of terrorism used to list individuals or entities must be consistent with the principle of legality and best practise international standards on definition. There must be rigorous due process safeguards, independent review, and effective remedies for violations. Any restrictive measures imposed must be strictly necessary and proportionate and not applied on an automatic or indiscriminate basis. Regional human rights bodies should also be involved in the scrutiny of listings.

Thirdly, the SR's report also encourages **regional military cooperation against terrorism**, from capacity building and technical assistance to peacekeeping and combat operations to respect applicable international law. There are some positive practises in the African Union, European Union, and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, amongst others. Regional missions must respect the prohibition on the use of force as strictly interpreted by the International Court of Justice. They must recognise at the organisational level that they are bound by customary international humanitarian law and human rights law, and that they bear legal responsibility for violations by their organs and agents.

Regional organisations should adopt comprehensive frameworks and procedures on compliance with humanitarian law and the protection of civilians. They should independently investigate alleged violations and make reparation and pay compensation for violations. They should act decisively where troop-contributing countries fail to address violations. They should also assess human rights risks in advance of and during missions, including when partnering with host states or other third states. They must scrupulously respect best practise international standards when supplying arms or munitions. They should be transparent in publicly reporting on their operations. Regional missions, critically, should also always be part of a comprehensive response to terrorism that addresses the root causes of conflict, including, importantly, state violations of human rights, including when countering terrorism, along with poor governance, and ensure that missions enable, not impede, peacemaking and reconciliation.

As mentioned, the present report is a sequel to his earlier report to the General Assembly in October. In brief, in that report, the SR urged regional organisations to **review and revise**



overbroad terrorism definitions and offences to prevent abuse. They should further ensure regional cooperation, legal cooperation on extradition, mutual assistance, and intelligence sharing respects human rights, particularly non-reformal, privacy, and data protection.

The SR urged regional organisations to **preventively apply human rights due diligence** policies. Next, to ensure that they have human rights and gender expertise amongst their staff, and further, to adequately fund the mainstreaming of human rights within counterterrorism activities. The SR further recommended that regional organisations improve transparency and public reporting about their counterterrorism activities, enhance oversight and accountability, including remedies for violations.

Most regional organisations could also do much more to **assist victims of terrorism**. The United Nations, too, must ensure that its many proliferating forms of counterterrorism engagement with regional organisations advance, not undermine, human rights, particularly when equipping regional organisations with new security powers, tools, and technologies.

PRESENTATION OF COUNTRY VISIT REPORTS

Thanking the Government of **Benin** for its invitation and its positive cooperation, the SR states Benin's openness is a model for other states who appear to be very shy about accepting the SR's requests to visit. The SR expresses his sympathy with the people and Government of Benin in particular for the recent cross-border attack that killed at least 30 people in the north of the country.

The SR commends Benin for adopting a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that strengthens its security response while addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism and improving human rights. The Government is promoting development in historically neglected border regions, increasing access to basic services and infrastructure like schools and hospitals, combating stigmatisation of marginalised groups and settling land disputes, generously welcoming refugee victims of terrorism from the Sahel, and reforming its criminal justice system. He also acknowledges the professionalism of its security forces and efforts to build trust with affected communities.

In suggesting improvements, the SR encourages Benin to narrow and clarify its definition of terrorism and terrorist defences to encompass only acts that are genuinely terrorist according to best practise international standards. Efforts to reduce arbitrary arrests and protracted pretrial detention and to ensure access to legal representation and fair trial should also be strengthened. He further urges Benin to accelerate its existing efforts to address serious prison overcrowding and ensure detention conditions are humane according to international standards.

Assistance to victims of terrorism could also be more institutionalised at the legal level. To assist Benin in preventing the spread of terrorism, the SR urges the international community to co-invest with the Government in increasing assistance to displaced persons and host communities, promoting development and economic rights in vulnerable border areas, and strengthening the regulation of religious schools to prevent child exploitation. He also encourages Benin to strengthen oversight and accountability mechanisms relevant to countering terrorism and to remove any unjustified restrictions that prevent civil society and the media from commenting on security and human rights issues.



COMMUNICATIONS AND FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Over the past year, the misuse of laws and narratives to counter terrorism continued unabated. The SR joined **110 communications** to member states on all continents and almost 60 press releases raising diverse human rights concerns from war crimes to transnational repression to protecting victims of terrorism, including hostages. Concerns were also addressed to responsible companies and non-state armed groups.

The SR participated actively in the busy Global Counterterrorism Coordination Compact and United Nations Counterterrorism Bodies in New York. The SR advocated for and welcomed the Security Council's adoption of a permanent humanitarian exemption to counterterrorism sanctions, and he now urges its full implementation at a time when foreign aid flows are drastically falling.

Geographically, the SR paid special attention to counterterrorism in Africa, including **country visits to Benin and Cote d'Ivoire**, thanking both Governments for their constructive participation. He also undertook **academic visits** focussing on African regional institutions, along with regional organisations in other parts of the world, including the European Union, Council of Europe, NATO, and the League of Arab States, plus ASEAN, thereby welcoming their cooperation. He also focused on the persistent violations of international law during the related armed conflicts in the Middle East, including in Israel and Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Yemen.

To conclude, the SR stresses that the international community meets at a **time of relentless attacks on the international norms and institutions** that are central to the SR's mandate to protect human rights while countering terrorism. These include aggressive uses of force and illegal annexations of foreign territory and threats thereof, as well as **rampant international crimes** and complicity in them by those who arm, finance, and politically shield them. They also include attacks on international institutions, the International Criminal Court, the United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East, and the United Nations as a whole, from the Secretary-General to some of his fellow special procedures mandate holders.

Our **institutions are also faltering by neglect** due to debilitating underfunding by member states. The SR emphasises that the abysmal political failure to address the conditions conducive to violence in Palestine or to challenge the impunity prevailing there has condemned the whole region's people to an endless cycle of suffering and vengeance. There can never be a sustainable peace without justice, according to international law, including the right to self-determination.

The **apocalyptic violence in Palestine** also signals to other states that there may be no consequences for decimating whole civilian societies while fighting terrorism, returning us to the scorched-earth tactics of the colonial counterinsurgency era.

The SR urges all countries to unite against coercion by major powers that seeks to break the international legal system and the peace and protection of human rights that it offers. Do not seek refuge in bilateral deal-making in the hope that your own country will be spared. Bullies respond only to strength, strength in numbers. Standing together is our greatest hope.



CONCLUDING REMARKS

The SR appreciates that **Benin** took his report and my recommendations very seriously. He further appreciated the multiple rounds of feedback, both in-country and subsequently. While on some issues there may be disagreement, the SR is delighted to continue the dialogue to see where the recommendations can be taken up appropriately.

Thanking the EU for the comments provided, the SR believes that lots of the European Union counterterrorism sanctions regime is human rights compliant, in part as a result of the strength of European judicial human rights monitoring. Some of the recommendations contained in his report, as is the nature of special procedures, is to encourage good practise to become even better. In other words, don't settle for the minimum compliance with human rights, but go above and beyond and set the agenda for good practise everywhere.

On **reprisals**, states should make sure to have strong reprisal policies in place, an accessible focal point, so that people know where to go if they have concerns about intimidation. Make use of the full suite of powers of the regional organisation, including suspension of privileges where appropriate if a member state is committing reprisals, and use that high-level political peer pressure at the most senior leadership of the organisation to send the message that reprisals are not tolerated by the organisation. The SR apologises for not answering the question on **foreign agent laws** as his mandate is limited to countering terrorism, and does not encompass the broader spectrum of national security, issues of which foreign agent laws are a very important one in the context of protecting civil society.

The **misuse of technology by terrorist groups** is a point the SR also made in the Pact for the Future last year, but in his response to the Pact for the Future, he also expressed disappointment that the Pact did not identify the misuse of new technologies by states when countering terrorism, including the use of artificial intelligence, spyware, facial recognition software, surveillance technologies, and that is the flipside of the misuse by terrorist groups. Turning to state **sponsorship of terrorism and misuse of sanctions regimes**, the SR shares concerns about the abusive labelling of certain states as sponsors of terrorism even if they are not. Of course, if they are, then there is a legitimate place for sanctions as a lawful countermeasure under international law to bring a state into compliance with international law if, for example, it is sponsoring armed groups to use force or intervene against a foreign state. This is very old international law. The terrorism label is not needed to justify sanctions in such cases.

The SR appreciated the discussions he had with the **Arab League** in preparing his report, and his door is open for continuing dialogue if there are errors in the report. The SR welcomes a potential peace agreement between **Turkey and the PKK**. The devil is in the detail, and there is very little of that yet on the public record, so he encourages the parties to be as transparent as possible on that front, but also peace with justice. Mentioning very serious violations committed by both sides of that conflict over many decades, the SR states it is not enough to just stop the fighting. You need to account for the past and provide reparation where appropriate as well.

Regarding civil society, there is evidence of **good engagement with civil society** in the UN system, but it is very inconsistent and patchy. The SR welcomes that the counterterrorism bodies in New York are making great efforts at the moment to increase their engagement, including one



of the Working Groups of the Global Compact the SR is a member of, the Human Rights Working Group, is showing leadership on this front, but also movement in the Counterterrorism Executive Directorate and the United Nations Office of Counterterrorism as well.

On Iraq, the SR is concerned about the weaponisation of hate speech to shut down legitimate expression, including in relation to some current conflict. On how to **improve accountability** for violations committed during military missions, he evokes an example from Australia, which committed some war crimes in Afghanistan as part of the International Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF), and to Australia's great credit, it has been reforming the culture of its military. It has established an office to prosecute some of our most senior soldiers for war crimes and it is also paying reparation and compensation to the victims' families in Afghanistan. He sent a communication to Australia recently on this front, but unlike a number of other countries who clearly are alleged to have committed war crimes in Afghanistan, who have done very little by way of combating impunity, **Australia is a good example.**

Thanking **Spain** for its leadership on victims of terrorism over many years, including as a member of the group of friends of victims of terrorism, he recommends all states the United Nations Model Legislative Provisions on Victims of Terrorism, which has a whole series of good practises on how to engage victims' associations in efforts to assist victims. The SR extends his gratitude to **Mexico** for its 20 years of leadership as penholder of his mandate and encourages all states to back his mandate. The SR recalls that states have mandated him not only to monitor 193 countries, but also 46 UN entities as part of the UN Global Compact, but have not provided the SR with resources to fulfil that aspect of his mandate. He further expresses his sympathy with the people of **Pakistan** for a recent attack on a passenger train which resulted in large-scale hostage-taking.

The SR praises Azerbaijan and the Maldives for their leadership on **repatriating their nationals from arbitrary inhuman detention in northeast Syria**, and encourages other states whose nationals have been stuck there for many years, including large numbers of children, to do the same. Concerning the designation of organised crime groups and cartels as terrorist, the SR encourages all members to differentiate those quite different forms of violence in their legal frameworks. The SR offers his technical assistance to the Alliance of Sahel States, including Niger and Burkina, to assist them in combating terrorism in conformity with human rights.

On the **root causes**, in his country reports the SR places emphasis on the importance of addressing conditions conducive to terrorism. With regard to **cross-border uses of force on the pretext of countering terrorism**, over the last 18 months the SR has issued many statements condemning violence by many states in the Middle East in violation of prohibitions on the use of force. The SR echoes India's call on states to conclude the 25-year marathon negotiation for the draft **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism**. Vague, overbroad definitions of terrorism are one of the most common human rights violations the SR faces in his job.

The SR stresses **civil society interventions** prove his point about the value of engaging with them on counterterrorism, and reiterates his previously expressed concerns about China's national security laws and the case of Mr. Jimmy Lai. He looks forward to working constructively with China to improve its national laws. To conclude, in a very constructive spirit, the SR thanks all members for expressing agreement and disagreement with his report and looks forward to maintaining a constructive dialogue with those who disagree with elements of his report.



INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Views Expressed by the Country Concerned

Benin thanks the SR for the presentation of his final report on his visit from 18 to 27 November 2024. By inviting and hosting the SR for his visit, Benin intended once again to demonstrate its commitment to human rights, as well as its constant willingness to cooperate with the Council's mechanisms following its UPR review under the fourth cycle in January 2023.

The SR during his stay benefited from the required assistance to fully independently carry out his programme of work as agreed with the government of Benin. In a regional context that is of concern as it is marked by the spread of the terrorist threat from the Sahel to the coastal countries, including Benin, he was able to meet most of the national actors involved in fighting terrorism and in protecting human rights on the one hand, and he was also able to visit sites in several areas of the country. It is the place here to welcome the spirit of cooperation and dialogue that the SR demonstrated as he carried out his activities.

With respect to the final report emanating from this visit, the Government of Benin transmitted to the team prior to this interactive dialogue our observations aiming to bring in some clarification and corrections on some inaccurate or tendentious statements in line with the legislation and public policies applicable to facts that are reported. Moreover, the Government of Benin takes note of the recommendations made by the SR and will ensure that they will be examined with full attention for the appropriate purposes.

To conclude, Benin would like to reiterate the determination of its Government to preserve and defend through an implacable fight against the terrorist threat the considerable progress achieved over the past few decades in strengthening the rule of law and the economic and social development in our country in order to guarantee the promotion and the protection of human rights of the population of Benin throughout our country.

Views Expressed by State Delegations

Lithuania and the Nordic Baltic countries appreciate the SR's insights on human rights protection by regional organisations while countering terrorism with a specific focus on civil society engagement, sanctions, and military cooperation. The Nordic Baltic countries are concerned about the growing trend of using counterterrorism as a cover to repress civil society. Similarly, so-called foreign agent laws introduced in various countries violate international human rights law and are designed to silence and stigmatise independent civil society, human rights defenders, media, and other dissenting voices. Authorities use intimidation to discourage legitimate civil society activities such as advocacy, public debates, and demonstrations aimed at influencing public policy. These measures are unacceptable. Any efforts by governments to silence civil society engagement should be met with accountability. They also believe that regional organisations should ensure a safe space for equal and meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels, including for those expressing critical views. Civil society actors, human rights defenders, and media should be better protected from online and offline harassment, violence, arbitrary detention, and disappearances.



Ghana speaking on behalf the African group emphasized that there is no justification for terrorism. The African group strongly and unequivocally condemns terrorism in its forms and manifestations, and firmly believes that the threat of international terrorism demands a unified and coherent response at all levels. Member states have the primary responsibility to ensure the safety of their citizens and property, which are sovereign duties that cannot under any circumstance be transferred to non-state actors. Welcoming the aid review of the United Nations Counterterrorism Strategy in 2023, the African group stresses the importance of building on its key elements for the ninth review in 2026, which tackled among other issues relating to exacerbation of hate speech, new and emerging threats such as the misuse of technology for terrorism purposes, as well as importance of upholding human rights in the fight against terrorism. The African group is committed to guiding, promoting, and raising awareness, while also protecting the building and capacity of relevant stakeholders. It will continue providing operational and technical advice, support, and training to address terror-related issues. In conclusion, the African group affirms its unwavering commitment of to eradicate the scourge of terrorism, both within Africa and globally.

Venezuela, on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the UN Charter, expresses the Group's strong condemnation of the unjustified re-inclusion of Cuba on the arbitrary, illegal, and unilateral list of states alleged to sponsor terrorism drafted by the US State Department. This unacceptable action confirms the damaging and non-transparent nature of that list, while also noting the deep concern that the United States government seeks to further the siege against Cuba in order to hinder financial and commercial operations and cause shortages among the Cuban people. Cuba's unfair inclusion on this list strengthens the negative impact of the criminal economic and financial embargo on the attainment of the human rights of the Cuban people. The Group recalls the repeated appeals to the United States Governments made by several Special Procedures mandate holders, many states, international organisations, civil society, and other actors to withdraw Cuba from the illegal list in the embargo. The Group strongly rejects the political manipulation of the fight against terrorism, and the group reiterates its unwavering solidarity with the people and the government of Cuba and urges the Government of the United States to bring an immediate, unconditioned end to the embargo to comply with the 32 resolutions adopted on this topic by the UNGA and to remove Cuba from the list of states allegedly sponsoring terrorism.

Jordan jointly with the Arab Group takes note of the reports and stresses the importance to assess the role of regional organisations in fighting terrorism while taking into consideration the constructive efforts of such organisations. The League of Arab States plays a key role in the anti-terrorist struggle. It has adopted our strategy to fight terrorism and to promote inter-Arab cooperation. It has established a legal framework and adopted the necessary measures in line with the human rights law. In order to face this scourge, the League of Arab States has convened conferences and workshops and with the assistance of the United Nations and other international organisations, it deployed efforts to fight terrorism. However, the report does not fully and accurately reflect all the efforts undertaken by the League of Arab States, thereby stressing the fact that information should be sought from reliable sources and that generalisations should be avoided in terms of fighting terrorism and upholding human rights.



Thanking the SR for his report, **Kuwait** appreciates his efforts to shed light on fighting terrorism and upholding human rights. The role of regional organisations has been addressed as has the role of CSOs and the respect in military organisations of human rights. Kuwait attaches special importance to the legal framework for fighting terrorism and for upholding conventions. It has implemented national strategies to emphasise preventive measures and awareness-raising measures to ensure that the society is protected from extremist actions and that moderation prevails. Kuwait is of the view that the impact of military operations should be studied in order to ensure that military operations are in line with humanitarian laws and that measures should be taken to guarantee the protection of civilians and accountability. It fully cooperates with the UN bodies and intends to strike a balance between fighting terrorism and upholding human rights. For this purpose, Kuwait calls for a dialogue on these issues.

Taking note of the SR's report, **Türkiye** clarifies that its participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was a strictly non-combat mission and its own PRT operations were strictly civilian-led and focused on sustainable development of Afghan people. Türkiye had to pursue a simultaneous fight against multiple terrorist organisations for decades. It has always upheld human rights while countering terrorism in line with our constitution and international human rights commitments. Türkiye has not wavered to uphold and promote democratic values and human rights while neighbouring regions have been experiencing devastating wars and conflicts, erosion of international order, and gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Türkiye's message is clear - adherence to human rights must remain a priority for all countries. The PKK terrorist organisation, which aims to destabilise both the country and its region and violates the most fundamental right to life has become ineffective as a result of its determined struggle in every field. This includes Türkiye's strong commitment to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. This situation was also assessed by the PKK ringleader and he called on the organisation to lay down its arms and dissolve itself. Dismantling, disarmament, and dissolution of all terrorist structures of PKK is essential for a sustainable and peaceful solution.

Switzerland thanks the SR for his report and welcomes his recommendations, in particular those calling on regional organisations to strengthen their cooperation with civil society. These recommendations are all the more relevant for Switzerland given its prospects for the presidency of the OSCE in 2026. As emphasised during the opening of the UNHRC, guaranteeing the participation of civil society is crucial to ensuring the quality of the debates and the mandate of the promotion and protection of human rights. It is all the more crucial in implementing strategies to fight terrorism. For several years, Switzerland has supported the annual study of the Global Centre on Cooperative Security on sustainable cooperation between civil society involved in fighting terrorism and the UN actors that are involved in order to uphold human rights in applying anti-terrorist measures. This study has highlighted the challenges found by the UN to establish a significant dialogue with civil society in this area while emphasising a common will to improve the situation.

Reiterating its support to the SR's mandate, **Iraq** shares his view, namely, that CSOs must participate in the fight against terrorism as well. CSOs, national and international ones in Iraq, have significantly contributed to reducing hate speech through a dialogue with the participation



of religious leaders and community leaders. Iraq believes that CSOs are full partners in protecting victims of terrorism and providing psychological support to said victims.

Malawi welcomes the SR's report which examines the protection of human rights by regional authorities while countering terrorism in relation to civil society engagement, counterterrorism sanctions, and media activities and operations. Counterterrorism efforts must be within the dictates of human rights law. It is for this reason that Malawi has taken steps to adopt a robust counterterrorism legislative framework. In 2022, Malawi amended the penal code to specifically criminalise terrorist acts as well as provide jurisdiction in respect to terrorist offences committed outside Malawi. A special law commission has been set up to develop a comprehensive registration on counterterrorism in Malawi. The registration aims to build on provisions in the penal code and the Financial Crimes Act and provide for, among others, terrorism and terrorist acts, i.e., definition of terrorism, terrorism crimes and financial crimes, human rights considerations and counterterrorism, international cooperation on counterterrorism, special investigation techniques, sentencing consideration, access to information, and national coordination and monitoring mechanisms. Malawi welcomes the recommendation made by the SR on the need to strike a balance between countering terrorism and enhancing human rights.

Spain reiterates its support to the SR's mandate and thanks him, particularly for his participation in the Conference on the Victims of Terrorism which held on 8-9 October in Vitoria, Castilla. Spain recalls that March 11 is the European Day of Remembrance of all victims of terrorism. Following the devastating attacks in Madrid on March 11, 2004, where 200 people lost their lives due to integrationist violence, Spain in its recent history has experienced terrorism far too often, but we have overcome it strongly and consistently with our values and with the participation of civil society, namely, with the associations of victims and with strict respect for human rights. Terrorism, however, persists in many parts of the world and it is for that reason that the sanctioned systems for terrorist activities meet the highest levels of international law. As the European Union's sanctioned system does.

As this year marks the 20th anniversary of this mandate, **Mexico** will present a draft resolution to renew it for further three years. Thanking the SR for the presentation of the report on regional organisations and though the content focusses more on bodies that are not in the Americas, Mexico is pleased to note that it says that in Latin America there are the standards and processes to promote the participation of civil society. Mexico agrees with the recommendations asking for increased participation of civil society and to protect it from reprisals and discrimination. Laws and practises to combat terrorism should not curtail civic space or humanitarian action disproportionately or with discrimination or in an unnecessary way. Lastly, on the designation of criminal gangs as terrorist groups, Mexico points out that terrorism and organised crime both have to be prevented and combated but to conflate the two into one could mean failed strategies and lead to the stigmatisation of communities. These are two different phenomena with their own legal frameworks and their own fora for separate treatment.

Notwithstanding the challenges identified, **South Africa** appreciates the SR's examination of the African Union's initiatives, his recognition of the experiences that the continent has gained in this regard. Indeed, regional cooperation is the linchpin of any effective counterterrorism strategy. Yet for this strategy to advance, it cannot simply address the manifestations but must importantly



deal with the root causes, including the nexus between security, development and human rights. This perspective underpins South Africa's approach to counterterrorism at home, on the continent and beyond. As part of this process, South Africa deplores the manner in which counterterrorism measures continue to be weaponised to silence critics. As a country whose leaders were once labelled by some as so-called terrorists, including our Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nelson Mandela, for fighting a righteous cause against an unjust system, South Africa is particularly concerned about the stigmatisation of those engaged in similar struggles. This is especially the case within the context of foreign occupation, where counterterrorism measures have been invoked to repress those engaged in legitimate struggles to assert their inalienable right to self-determination, which is the foundation from which all other human rights and fundamental freedoms flow. As the UN Secretary-General reminds us, terrorism is the denial and destruction of human rights, and the fight against terrorism will never succeed.

Iran states that every day, innocent people are killed due to terrorist action and instrumental abuse of this act by some government. Terrorism has been grossly politicised in various countries, where definitions of civil and human rights are structured to legitimate extraterritorial killing. The MKO terrorist cult was responsible for the assassination of over 23,000 innocent individuals at the onset of the Islamic Revolution and now its refugees are in some Western countries. US economic terrorism against Iran poses a significant threat to human rights, climbing more victims among the mass than any other form of terrorism. These inhuman crimes inferring offer the most fundamental human rights, especially the right to life. The corruptly and criminal assassination of figure like Lt. Col. Qasem Soleimani and the brutal targeting of leaders such as Mr. Ismail Haniyeh highlighted the ongoing violence and instability in the region. Finally, Iran bears the heavy burden of combating terrorism alone and calls for responsibility action from government and international institutions. It urges them to rise above selective and politically motivated response, especially in light of the new form of terrorism associated by modern technology.

Burkina Faso is aware of the importance of the contributions of human rights organisations in fighting terrorism, and thus we have taken measures in order to create a propitious environment for their activities. The adoption of the Law of 2017 to protect human rights defenders and the Law of 2022 instituting a mechanism for the defence of the fatherland is part and parcel of those efforts. Regarding the SR's recommendation to provide awareness-raising on human rights in the framework of fighting terrorism, these are activities that are regularly carried out by law enforcement bodies in Burkina in order to fight impunity and the violation of human rights committed by military and other bodies. The military courts have established a mechanism to document any violations committed by combating forces where there are either disciplinary sanctions or criminal prosecutions available as penalties. Burkina Faso reiterates its sincere commitment to cooperating regionally and between states in order to combat terrorism which violates the rights of the people.

The **State of Palestine** emphasized that countering terrorism means upholding international law. It means rejecting all attempts to misuse the legitimate fight against terrorism to advance illegitimate goals or justify injustice. Since its inception, Israel has been exposing the Palestinian people to various forms of violence and terrorism as part of its settler colonial project, be it expropriation of land, exploitation of natural resources, forcible displacement, terror attacks by



extremist settler groups, demolishing houses, abducting children from their houses, and designating organisations advocating for accountability as terrorist organisations. The genocidal assault on Gaza is the latest manifestation of Israel's state terrorism. However, instead of condemning state terrorism and the misuse of counterterrorism legislations, Israel and its allies decided to put the blame and condemn those resisting the settler colonial regime. Is it no longer terrorism when the perpetrators are wearing uniforms and using the latest military technology? The failure of the international community to put an end to decades of impunity and instead condemning the Palestinian people for resisting oppression is the height of hypocrisy that only enables the commission of atrocity crimes and the collapse of a legal system that was created to prevent such crimes and, when they occur, to punish them. For this, Palestine once again reminds all states of their obligations to ensure that Israel brings the illegal occupation to an immediate end, including non-recognition and not aiding Israel's internationally wrongful acts.

Togo thanks the SR for his report, which highlights the importance of the protection of human rights while fighting terrorism in regional organisations. Togo, as the organisation it belongs to, is engaged in anti-terrorist combat, in particular with ECOWAS and the Accra Initiative, and it has always reconciled the imperative to protect human rights combined with the need to be effective in our anti-terrorist strategies and actions. The protection of human rights is guaranteed by the law and controlled by the National Assembly through the parliamentary authorisation for the state of emergency in the region of the Saban. According to the latest evaluation, this has given rise to the extension of the state of emergency for one additional year, on 6 March 2025. Moreover, Togo's approach also has a specific aspect aimed at strengthening socioeconomic rights and the resilience of the populations in zones that are plagued by terrorism, in particular the programme to reinforce resilience in the region of the Saban. This programme aims to improve the daily life of people living in these areas through the implementation of basic social services, in particular in the area of health, education, and women's empowerment.

Egypt stresses the importance of regional organisations making efforts to fight terrorism while taking into consideration the various national frameworks. It is necessary to strengthen national efforts and to ensure that there are appropriate measures in the fight against terrorism in line with international human rights law. CSOs are fighting against terrorism and it is recommended that this be carried out through clear mechanisms in order to achieve the goals. Egypt affirms the importance to move ahead in regional cooperation in order to exchange information to fight the financing of terrorism. Extremism and violent extremism which leads to terrorism is an international problem which requires international cooperation.

Albania stresses that regional organisations play an important role in ensuring that the fight against terrorism is both effective and just. Albania recognises the essential role of CSOs and academics in monitoring counter-terrorism practises. In this regard, cooperation between government and CSOs helps to ensure transparency. Albania has a comprehensive legal framework for preventing and combating terrorism and is committed to strongly support international counter-terrorism efforts while safeguarding human rights and reinforcing the rule of law. In Albania, CSOs engage both at the national and local level through research, advocacy and by exchanging good practises in countering violent extremism. Civil society has meaningfully participated during consultation processes for the national strategy for the fight against violent extremism. To conclude, it emphasises the importance of ensuring full protection and respect for



human rights, fundamental freedom, the rule of law and guaranteeing non-discrimination while countering terrorism.

In **Algeria**'s view, terrorism is a threat to peace and international security, namely in Africa and in the Sahel, where it hampers development. It is important to improve cooperation between the United Nations and regional mechanisms in order to embrace a balanced, inclusive approach, one that takes into account security, one that allows us to take on the deep causes of this phenomenon while respecting fundamental freedoms and combating terrorism. Algeria has pursued its efforts working with international and regional cooperation, notably through the AFRIPOL and other mechanisms. Algeria took an initiative during the last session of the UN Security Council, and organised a high-level meeting on terrorism and coordinating its efforts to combat terrorism while respecting human rights. Any effective approach must bear in mind the impact that the fight against terrorism has on development. Algeria has pledged over a billion dollars to combat terrorism in Africa. Poverty is one of the contributing causes to terrorism. It will improve security and protect human rights and to attain sustainable development.

The **Maldives** strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. To this end, it has undertaken key legislative and institutional reforms to strengthen its counterterrorism framework. Amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act have enhanced measures against terrorism financing, recruitment, and incitement. Prevention remains a priority. Its community outreach programmes engage local educators and civil society to foster resilience against extremist identities. International cooperation is equally vital, and the Maldives remains an active partner, cooperating with UNODC, UNOCT, and regional networks to strengthen international efforts. While terrorism continues to evolve, the Maldives remains committed to upholding human rights and the rule of law in all counterterrorism efforts. This is evident after the successful reintegration of a family that was repatriated from Syria. This national reintegration centre is currently in the process of rehabilitating and reintegrating additionally repatriated families. It recognises the importance of decentralising the population and ensuring human rights and the dignity of repatriated individuals are maintained.

Belgium is painfully aware of the suffering inflicted by indiscriminate terrorist acts. Fighting terrorism is and will remain a priority of our domestic and foreign policy. However, it is not challengeable that fighting terrorism cannot undermine human rights. Rigorously upholding human rights does not weaken the fight against terrorism. On the contrary, it lends it greater justice. The regional organisations play an important and growing role in this fight. Belgium is convinced that the three aspects on which the SR's report focusses, namely the commitment and inclusion of civil society, anti-terrorist sanctions and military cooperation, are the crucial elements in the strategy of regional organisations against terrorism. Belgium read the SR's recommendations with great interest, notably those on the way to guarantee that these policies be in line with human rights. In your report, you recommend that member states of regional organisations take significant measures against any member state carrying out reprisals against CSOs for having been involved with such regional organisations.

Eritrea states that a balanced and principled approach is essential to prevent counterterrorism measures from undermining fundamental freedoms, state sovereignty and the right to development. In its region, terrorism and violent extremism threaten peace and stability. To



further exasperate these external pressures, including unilateral and arbitrary sanctions imposed under the pretext of counterterrorism within national institutions, harm innocent populations and obstruct sustainable peace efforts. Such actions contradict the principles of justice, fairness and due process. Addressing terrorism requires more than just military responses. It demands meaningful engagement with local communities, economic development and social inclusion to tackle the root causes of radicalisation. Military cooperation must be transparent, accountable and aligned with international human rights obligations to ensure that counterterrorism efforts are not politicised and contribute to the lasting peace and security rather than exasperating instability. To conclude, Eritrea underscores the importance of national and regional-led solutions that respect sovereignty and prioritise regional partnership. Yet regional organisations must be capable, funded by their own member states and empower to lead security initiatives that reflect regional realities and priorities. Just and effective counterterrorism strategy must strengthen human rights protections while equally addressing the structural factors that fill insecurity.

The **Russian Federation** notes that the analysis contained in the report of the activities of regional organisations in fighting terrorism gives food for thought and deserves comprehensive analysis. Russia has consistently advocated for strengthening international cooperation in fighting terrorism, taking into consideration the central and coordinating role of the UN while strictly upholding norms and principles of international law, including the principle of sovereign equality of states and non-interference in domestic affairs as well as the primary responsibility of states in fighting terrorism and extremism. At the same time, it is necessary to maintain the established distribution of labour between the UN organs and mechanisms in order to avoid duplication. This also relates to the sensitive and complex topic of fighting terrorism. Russia asks the SR to take this into account in his further work, including when he signs on to joint declarations of the Special Procedures that do not have any direct bearing on the mandate entrusted to him. Russia also recalls the imperative to build up constructive and mutually respective dialogues with states on the basis of the principles of independence, impartiality, and objectivity.

China has taken note of the SR's report and supports his efforts to fulfil his mandate with objectivity and impartiality and to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with member states so as to play his active role in this regard. Terrorism is a common enemy of mankind, seriously threatening international peace and security while gravely impacting human rights. In confronting the real threats of terrorism, China upholds respect for and protection of human rights as a basic principle of counterterrorism. Its approach integrates harsh punishment of terrorism with the protection of citizens' basic rights and maintenance of social order when handling terrorism cases in accordance with the law. On the one hand, China focusses on maintaining social stability and effectively combating terrorism. On the other hand, China safeguards the human dignity and legal rights of suspects, dependents, and offenders, ensuring their rights to defence, information, participation, and legal recourse. Its counterterrorism policies align with its domestic realities and international practises, yielding positive results. China opposes all forms of terrorism and stands ready to cooperate with the international community through mutual learning, dialogue, and cooperation based on equality and mutual respect.



Cote d'Ivoire congratulates the SR on the presentation of his report, which examines the protection of human rights by regional organisations in fighting terrorism through the engagement of civil society, anti-terrorist bodies, and military cooperation. It believes that CSOs should be involved in preventing and fighting terrorism to the extent to which their commitment strengthens the effectiveness, the transparency, and the legitimacy of anti-terrorist measures. This fight is also strengthened by regional military cooperation through capacity-building of actors and sharing intelligence. Within this context, Cote d'Ivoire has opened cooperation with partners and an academy to fight terrorism. At a sub-regional level, Cote d'Ivoire has participated in the ACRA initiative, consisting in working on information exchange and joint operations across borders. To conclude, Cote d'Ivoire calls on states and all stakeholders to adopt a comprehensive approach to fighting terrorism while upholding human rights.

Cameroon reiterates its commitment to fighting terrorism whilst upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms. Fighting this scourge must be part and parcel of an integrated approach which ensures a balance between security and the respect of fundamental rights. Cameroon saw with interest the stress placed in this report on the role of regional organisations in protecting human rights while fighting terrorism. It shares the view that the commitment of civil society in developing and implementing strategies to fight terrorism may foster better acceptance of policies adopted and strengthen their effectiveness. However, this involvement should be adapted to national and regional contexts taking into consideration security exigencies. With respect to sanctions against terrorism, Cameroon emphasises the need to guarantee that measures adopted at a regional and international level fully uphold the principle of international law, human rights law and humanitarian law. It insists on the importance of oversight mechanisms and effective remedies to avoid abuse and to uphold the rights of persons concerned. With respect to military operations conducted in the fight against terrorism, Cameroon stresses the need for a comprehensive approach integrating development, governments and human rights. Regional military missions must be accompanied by monitoring mechanisms which are independent as well as accountability mechanisms to ensure their conformity with international standards.

Bangladesh considers terrorism and violent extremism as serious threats to global peace and security and maintains an unconditional zero tolerance policy against terrorism and violent extremism. Our unwavering commitment is not to let any terrorist or extremist entity carry out terrorist acts using our territory. Bangladesh is party to all international counter-terrorism instruments and has a strong domestic legal framework to counter terrorism and violent extremism. Its national strategy focusses on four pillars, addressing underlying conditions, prevention measures, capacity building and upholding human rights and the rule of law as identified in UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Bangladesh believes that addressing non-traditional security risks is equally important to ensuring global peace and security. Bangladesh is a party to the UN Convention Against Corruption as well as the Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime. Bangladesh has enacted a strong legal regime and implementation mechanism to counter drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering and terrorism financing and to strengthen criminal justice response in this regard. To conclude, it underscores the importance of cooperation and collaboration both at regional and multinational forum for enhancing the stress capacity to countering terrorism while protecting human rights.



Among the measures to reinforce the embargo applied against **Cuba** by the US Government, one stands out for its slanderous nature and the enormous economic and humanitarian damage it causes and that is the inclusion of Cuba on the unilateral and illegal list that arbitrarily labels countries as sponsors of terrorism. This list does not contribute in the slightest to combating terrorism. It is merely an instrument of political co-insertion through punitive and threatening economic actions which violates the human rights of all Cuban citizens. The inclusion of Cuba in that list deprives the Cuban people of foods, medicine, fuel, goods, essential assets for survival. The Government of the United States is well aware that Cuba does not sponsor terrorism nor does it support it in any way. It lies because it lacks political or ethical arguments to justify the economic war it is imposing on our country. Cuba is grateful to the 123 countries that issued a joint statement before this Council calling for Cuba's removal from the list. Cuba is also grateful to the Group of Friends of the UN Charter for the strong statement they made today in similar terms.

According to **Panama**, civil society's participation, particularly that of women's, children's, youth and victims' associations, all contribute to improving effectiveness, transparency, and the legitimacy of the measures adopted to foster a climate of trust with the affected communities and to guarantee full enjoyment of international law. Panama agrees with the SR on the need for regional organisations to actively contribute with civil society, creating safe environments and avenues at all levels for their periodic, accessible, inclusive, and meaningful participation, with clear information on various ways in which they can do this and the creation of mechanisms to avoid reprisals and discrimination.

31 **Ethiopia** commends the SR for his insightful report. As a country significantly impacted by terrorism, the effects on its peace and development have been profound and long-lasting. The Government of Ethiopia has been steadfast in its effort to prevent and combat terrorism by enacting and effectively implementing national laws, while also ratifying relevant international instruments. Recognising the need to balance counter-terrorism efforts with human rights, Ethiopia revised its legal framework and enacted the Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes Law. This Law addresses terrorism while safeguarding individual rights throughout the process. Ethiopia also emphasises the importance of training law enforcement personnel and stakeholders to ensure human rights are respected in the enforcement of these laws. Ethiopia is committed to ensuring that counter-terrorism measures do not undermine fundamental freedoms. It recognises the importance of regional and international cooperation in effectively addressing terrorism while upholding human rights. Ethiopia has been at the forefront of regional efforts through organisations like **IGAD** and the African Union, working alongside international partners to combat terrorism and protect human rights. In conclusion, Ethiopia is committed to combating terrorism in line with human rights and the rule of law.

Ireland welcomes the report's emphasis on the vital role of CSOs in regional counter-terrorism measures. Engaging CSOs enhances the overall legitimacy and effectiveness of counter-terrorism policies. We note with concern the significant barriers that restrict the meaningful participation of CSOs. A lack of engagement, lack of information, funding and resource constraints all have detrimental effects. Ireland also notes that the misuse of counter-terrorism strategies and legislation can restrict fundamental freedoms including the freedoms of association, assembly, expression and opinion. It urges all states to guarantee that measures



taken to counter-terrorism comply with international human rights law and to ensure accountability for human rights violations committed while countering terrorism. Ireland promotes a values-based approach to countering terrorism based on human rights and the rule of law. It recognises the necessity of military and law enforcement operations whilst also acknowledging that a counter-terrorism response must encompass a whole-of-society approach, building community resilience and focussing on ensuring a human rights-based and gender-inclusive perspective. Supporting civil society in countering terrorism is not only a human rights imperative but also a logical step towards more effective and comprehensive security strategies.

In this 20th anniversary of the SR's mandate, the **United Kingdom** reconfirms its commitment to the protection of human rights and the rule of law which underpin our counter-terrorism efforts. The report makes clear that cooperation and engagement remain key components to defeating the increasing threat of terrorism. They are also essential to help address the long-term drivers of terrorism. The UK also believes in the importance of the sanctions regime to deter those who wish to undertake terrorism and to do us harm. The protection of human rights and the rule of law should be at the forefront of our efforts. The UK therefore supports the extension of the SR's mandate for another three years. We continue to stand ready to engage with the Council and build capability and capacity to counter terrorism while protecting and promoting human rights around the world.

Georgia fully acknowledges the growing threat posed by international terrorism. The Government has developed a national counter-terrorism strategy and action plan, adopted a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach while emphasising respect for human rights in its implementation. In this regard, these respective agencies follow the principle of the rule of law and legality, the protection of the rights and freedom of individuals and legal entities, as well as the principle of equality and inadmissibility of discrimination. While implementing a strong legal framework and effective counter-terrorist law enforcement measures, Georgia is fully committed to fulfil all relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In addition, Georgia effectively cooperates with partners in providing and retrieving information on terrorists through Interpol, Europol and separate channels of communication. However, despite its efforts, the Russia-occupied regions of Georgia continue to represent major challenges in multiple dimensions. Considering Georgia's important transit role, the occupied regions remain at risk to be used for illegal activities such as trafficking and trade in arms, components of weapons of mass destruction, which can be used for terrorist purposes and pose threats to the security of Georgia.

Welcoming the SR's report, **Afghanistan** shares its concern over the misuse of counter-terrorism measures to justify human rights violations. Civilian casualties and violations of human rights during counter-terrorism operations were serious issues in Afghanistan during the past 20 years. However, with the military takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban in 2021, some countries are assuming that the Taliban itself, a group on the terrorism sanction list of many countries, to conduct counter-terrorism operations against their jihadi brethren such as ISKP and al-Qaeda is one of the biggest ironies of our time. Additionally, to expect them to protect human rights while conducting so-called counter-terrorism operations is even more irony. As we witnessed the intensified reprisal against civilians, in all parts of Afghanistan under the guise of counter-



terrorism, the Taliban exploits counter-terrorism narratives to justify arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance and extrajudicial executions. Its use of biometric data for persecution and mass surveillance consolidates their control through fear. Afghanistan calls for an independent investigative mechanism to document and assess human rights violations committed under the guise of counter-terrorism operations. The international community must prevent Afghanistan from becoming a hub for radicalisation and demand accountability for abuses.

Venezuela reiterates its strictest rejection of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In the past few days, we have witnessed the scandalous amount of funds destined through USAID to fascist groups of Venezuelan political opposition in order to carry out terrorist operations in Venezuela. In addition, mercenary groups ask from the land of some countries and with their indulgence funds through digital platforms in order to carry out acts of terror that lead to an alleged change of system in our country, which is why Venezuela rejects energetically that some countries are used as sources of financing and training grounds for armed groups, mercenaries, and terrorists that try to upset the sovereignty and integrity of the state's territories. Its new government plan called 'The Seven Transformations' has one goal, which is consolidating peace and citizen security with various strategies that seek to improve the model of citizen coexistence, the guarantee of justice, the enjoyment of human rights, and the safeguards of peace and territory, which is why Venezuela has developed, will continue to develop all actions aimed at guaranteeing the peace of our people in keeping with our domestic legislation.

Qatar states that the phenomenon of terrorism is a serious threat against peace and security as well as for human rights and the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. Moreover, the state of human the lack of human rights and foster terrorism. In this context, Qatar mentioned the role played by regional organisations and civil society as well as the government in order to look at the root causes of terrorism. The policies and measures taken in this area need to comply with norms and international standards and the four pillars of the international strategy for anti-terrorism. We must eradicate terrorism through bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation. Qatar has upheld a number of initiatives. It holds the International Centre for Counterterrorism Studies and also has an initiative for parliamentary participation in anti-terrorist action. Qatar emphasises the need to uphold the Charter for the Future in order to build a future free of terrorism through preventive strategies alongside UN organisations, regional organisations and sub-regional organisations in order to prevent terrorism.

Niger welcomes the relevant topics addressed in the report and the role played in fighting terrorism by actors and international organisations. As other countries of the Sahel, Niger has faced repeated attacks by armed groups since 2015 and has deployed major resources and means, including new technologies, to face these security challenges. However, due to the risks in terms of the full enjoyment of rights and liberties, Niger ensures that there are actions taken to build up the resilience of population and to ensure that the defence forces and law enforcement bodies uphold human rights and international humanitarian rights. These efforts are pooled with other countries of its region, in particular Mali and Burkina Faso, and Niger welcomes the perfect cooperation and the results achieved in this way. It thanks the SR for his excellent recommendations.



Malaysia strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and remain committed to combating this threat. A multifaceted approach is essential in countering the evolving and growing threat of terrorism. Malaysia remains steadfast in tackling the threats of terrorism and violent extremism by addressing the root causes, strengthening policies, legal framework and enforcement. In line with this, Malaysia's national action plan on preventing and countering extremism prioritises preventive measures, legal enforcement, rehabilitation and reintegration which we believe are key measures in addressing this threat. In the context of regional cooperation, ASEAN is committed to eradicating the scourge of terrorism, particularly within the frameworks of the ASEAN Convention on Counterterrorism and the ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counterterrorism. As Chair of ASEAN this year, Malaysia remains resolute in advancing the region's strategic role in the fight against the threat of radicalisation and violent extremism. Moving forward, Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to a balanced and inclusive approach, consistent with our principle of ensuring counterterrorism measures are undertaken based on the rule of law and respect for human dignity.

Armenia remains firmly committed to the global fight against terrorism and actively engages in addressing the evolving threats posed by terrorism at the national, regional and international level. In the context of the regard, Armenia has acceded and adheres to a number of relevant international documents, including the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism ratified in April 2022. Armenia shares the SR's view that the engagement of civil society in preventing and countering terrorism further enhances the effectiveness, transparency and legitimacy of counterterrorism measures. It believes that ensuring secure regional participation of civil society is essential to sharing best practises and building stronger capacities to effectively address the threats of terrorism. Hate speech, xenophobia, incitement to violence, both online and offline, especially when encouraged at state level, paved the way for radicalisation and terrorist recruitment, giving additional impetus to the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters. From this perspective, comprehensive approach and international cooperation are urgently required and is possible. In conclusion, Armenia reaffirms its unwavering commitment in implementing effective measures to combat international terrorism and related challenges, posing imminent threat to peace and security, democracy, rule of law, sustainable development and, first of all, to fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Taking note of the SR's report, **India** reiterates its position on terrorism. Terrorism is an existential threat to international peace and security. It knows no borders, nationality, or race, and is a challenge that the international community must combat collectively. Acts of terrorism violate the right to life of individual victims, as well as of their families and society at large. They are an anathema to democracy and fundamental freedoms. The best way to place human rights at the centre of efforts to counter terrorism would be to reject terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The SR's report advocates for greater and more meaningful engagement of civil society in the counterterrorism efforts of regional organisations in order to ensure that human rights are protected. India is of the view that the key to more meaningful engagement on such issues would be to work on the conclusion of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT). Lack of consensus on a universal definition of terrorism is a major obstacle to global counterterrorism efforts, as well as to any efforts that would flow from regional cooperation. India calls for renewed efforts by all parties concerned in this direction as per Action



Point 23 of the Pact for the Future. As far as the implementation of civil and political rights are concerned, their application in all cases continues to be guided by national laws in conjunction with state's treaty obligations, given the very nature of such human rights.

Saudi Arabia has taken note of the report, which does not reflect the challenges of countries combating terrorism. The report emphasised certain aspects, including the rise in terrorism, which requires a response, a strong response, in order to overcome these dangers. The report did not emphasise countries, including those who have suffered from terrorist attacks. The report has also not emphasised international cooperation, but it has shown an incomplete picture of the international combat against terrorism, which is a transnational threat. Saudi Arabia reaffirms its commitment to combating terrorism through our legislative framework, which is comprehensive and targets terrorism with efficient measures and respect for fundamental rights. Saudi Arabia will continue its cooperation with the United Nations and its international partners. Saudi Arabia has established an international centre, which aims to combat terrorism and fundamentalism while promoting tolerance. It further calls on all to use reliable data while avoiding generalisation, which will not facilitate the strengthening of human rights in combating terrorism.

Indonesia underscores the importance of a balanced approach in countering terrorism. Effective counterterrorism policies must integrate security measures with efforts to uphold human rights, accountability, and the rule of law. Indonesia implements a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy, combining law enforcement with rehabilitation and integration programmes. The legal framework has been strengthened to prevent radicalisation, protect victims' rights, and foster multi-stakeholder collaboration. Adopted in 2021, its National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism mandates collaboration between 44 ministries and agencies to combat terrorism, while ensuring a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. At the regional level, Indonesia remains committed to ASEAN-led efforts, including the ASEAN Convention on Counterterrorism and the ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counterterrorism. Moreover, the Bali Work Plan 2019-2025 serves as the largest ASEAN cross-sectoral and cross-pillar cooperation initiative, emphasising conflict prevention, dialogue, youth and women's empowerment, and education. In this regard, Indonesia notes the SR's report and encourage continued dialogue to strengthen regional and international cooperation in counterterrorism. It particularly supports the report's emphasis on the importance of CSOs in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of counterterrorism policies. Their meaningful engagement is essential to enhance transparency.

Ukraine appreciates the report and thanks the SR for analysing regional organisations' engagement with civil society, counterterrorism sanctions, and military cooperation. As Ukraine continues to defend itself against Russia's unprovoked and illegal armed aggression, it is essential to underscore the relevance of these issues in this context. Ukraine fully supports the SR's emphasis on the need for robust civil society engagement in counterterrorism efforts. In Ukraine, civil society plays a critical role in documenting violations of international law, advocating for human rights, and ensuring transparency and accountability in military operations. Ukraine also echoes the SR's concern over human rights protection in military operations. While Russia continues its brutal invasion and terror tactics, Ukraine's armed forces remain committed to upholding international law and prioritising civilian protection. To conclude,



Ukraine agrees with the SR's conclusion that bullies respond only to strength. In this regard, Ukraine calls for decisive action to designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism and to bolster efforts to counter the ongoing Russian armed aggression and stands ready to work with regional bodies to address terrorism in all its forms while protecting human rights.

Kenya thanks the SR for his report's focus on civil society engagement and the importance of effective counterterrorism strategies grounded into the rule of law with full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Kenya has been at the forefront of regional counterterrorism efforts, particularly in addressing the threat posed by terrorist organisations. Through its military presence and its robust national security measures, Kenya has worked tirelessly to degrade these organisations' capabilities and protect our citizens and those of neighbouring countries. Kenya continues to strengthen its border security and to enhance cooperation with regional partners to prevent the flow of foreign fighters and proliferation of terrorist ideologies. In its commitment to international counterterrorism frameworks, Kenya actively pursued the listing of al-Shabaab under the Resolution 1267 sanctions regime, an effort aimed at reflecting stronger measures against the group than those provided by UNSC Resolution 751 (1992). Kenya remains committed to exploring all available avenues to disrupt al-Shabaab's activities and financing. It acknowledges the importance of civil society engagement in countering terrorism. Kenya strives to foster constructive dialogue with CSOs to ensure that its counterterrorism efforts are informed by their expertise and perspectives and recognise the need for clear, accessible channels for civil society input.

Azerbaijan is of the view that state's efforts in restoring the violated rights of the victims of terrorism, reintegrating them into society, and providing remedies, truth, and justice are essential components of countering terrorism. Starting from 2018 until today, Azerbaijan has successfully repatriated 519 Azerbaijani citizens, including 460 children and 59 women from Iraq and Syria, who were kept in the camps. They were repatriated to their country as a result of phased measures taken by the Government of Azerbaijan, who has have been taking all necessary measures for the reintegration and rehabilitation of those persons. Azerbaijan's successful experience in this area was welcomed and commended by the former mandate holder on counterterrorism and human rights. He also emphasised the importance of dedicated endeavours of the national 'Working Group Responsible for the Repatriation of the Citizens of Azerbaijan' from Iraq and Syria, adding that Azerbaijani Government sets a strong and leading example in this area to be followed by other states. The Government of Azerbaijan will continue to take necessary measures to protect the rights and freedoms of its citizens who have become the victims of terrorism and who are in need of assistance.

Thanking the SR for his report, **Pakistan** emphasises the important role played by regional organisations in counterterrorism efforts while taking into consideration different national and regional contexts and to harmonise counterterrorism measures with international human rights law. As an active member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the OIC, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and other regional bodies, Pakistan underlines the need for enhanced regional and international efforts while respecting sovereignty of states and without politicisation. It also draws the SR's attention to the plight of those living under foreign occupation and where the legitimate struggle of occupied peoples for exercising their right to self-determination is falsely labelled under the bogey of terrorism. As a country



deeply affected by decades of foreign-sponsored terrorist activities, Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Recently, there has been a drastic uptick in Tehreek-e-Taliban/Fitna-al-Khawarij attacks against innocent civilians and this poses a direct threat to its people and the enjoyment of their human rights. While a secure and peaceful Afghanistan is vital for regional peace and development, terrorism within and from Afghanistan poses a serious threat to the country itself and to the region. Therefore, Pakistan calls upon the relevant authorities to ensure that Afghanistan's territory is not used for terrorist activities against its neighbours.

Lebanon thanks the SR for his insightful report and stresses that terrorism severely undermines human rights of victims in countless ways, but human rights should not be forfeited while fighting it because terrorists prevail when they succeed in sowing chaos and undermining the rule of law. Lebanon has for years suffered from that violent extremism and terrorism and relentlessly fought it. Therefore, Lebanon is aware of how gruelling is this fight that warrants international support for countries with limited means. As the SR, Lebanon recognises the essential role of CSOs in building resilience against radical ideologies and strengthening social cohesion. It also acknowledges the crucial contribution of international organisations, including regional ones, in fostering cooperation, aligning strategies and addressing the underlying causes of extremism that fuel terrorism. However, it is noteworthy that in the absence of internationally agreed legal definition of terrorism and given that sometimes there is selectivity and political motivation when the term is used as a mean to defame enemies, it is always important to keep aware of the complexity of this issue when it is addressed at the UNHRC in the context of human rights.

Views Expressed by intergovernmental Organizations

The **European Union (EU)** reiterates its call on all states to cooperate and accept requests for visits by the SR as the only entity within the UN system mandated to report on counterterrorism from a human rights perspective. The EU considers its engagement with CSOs a crucial aspect of its policy to prevent and counterterrorism. The EU is glad to see the European Commission's better regulation guidelines cited as a good practise in the report and noted that there remains room for improvement. On the report's comments on the EU restrictive measures, the EU underscores that they are in compliance with international law, fully respect due process and fair trial guarantees and are subject to independent judicial review. Last year, the EU adopted its human rights and international humanitarian law due diligence policy, which will further strengthen the already robust human rights component of the EU's counterterrorism efforts. The newly created Brussels Memorandum on Oversight and Accountability will help ensure that counterterrorism measures are transparent and grounded in the rule of law.

The **Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** takes note of the SR's assessment of international and regional efforts in countering terrorism. In this context, it is essential to acknowledge the role of organisations such as the OIC in combating terrorism and extremism. Since the adoption of the OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism in 1999, the OIC has continuously refined its strategies to address emerging threats, including cyberterrorism and terrorism financing. The Sawt Al-Hikma (Voice of Wisdom Center) plays a key role in countering extremist narratives, leveraging digital tools to dismantle misinformation and promote tolerance. The OIC's 2025 Programme of Action further reinforces its commitment to counterterrorism while



ensuring respect for human rights and international law. The OIC actively contributes to global counterterrorism discussions, engaging with regional and international partners, and participating in UN-led initiatives to strengthen coordinated efforts. Given these substantial contributions, it emphasises the importance of avoiding generalisations. The OIC remains committed to fighting the scourge of terrorism. In parallel, it continues to expand its engagement with CSOs and is increasingly collaborating with international NGOs, as demonstrated by the recent signing of an MOU with the Norwegian Refugee Council.

The **Council of Europe (CoE)** thanks the SR for his report and his contribution to its counterterrorism work. While taking note of the views expressed on the work on the new definition of terrorism of its Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT), it recalls that the CoE is an intergovernmental organisation with 46 Member States, all UN members, whose experts sit in the CTCT and make policy decisions that, once adopted, affect their own jurisdictions. These experts provided the SR with a detailed account of the process of the negotiations that started back in 2017 and explained the rationale of the choices made in the draft text. The CoE would have hoped to see its substantive reply reflected in the present report. All the more so, as the reply highlights that, even if the process is intergovernmental in character, the CTCT was, at all points, open to receiving input from any interested party, including Special Procedures and CSOs. The same will hold true as we move forward. The new definition of a terrorist offence does not, in any way, alter the existing obligation of the parties to implement counterterrorism measures in line with their human rights obligations stemming from relevant international treaties, including, but not limited to, the European Convention on Human Rights.

The **European Public Law Organisation (EPLO)** thanks the SR for his report. One of the key points in the oral presentation of his report was the role of regional organisations. He encouraged greater cooperation and additional funding. Some organisations such as ECOWAS have been criticised for the handling of transitional governments and that they are not doing enough to fight terrorism and restore constitutional order. EPLO asks whether the SR thinks that there is need of reforming some regional organisations to render them more effective in delivering their mandates.

Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations

International PEN has documented a disturbing global trend in the abuse of counterterrorism and national security laws in order to suppress the exercise of freedom of expression of writers, journalists and publishers. Emblematic of this abuse of power is the misuse of criminal laws, including the draconian national security law by the Hong Kong authorities to target, harass and imprison pro-democracy campaigners, journalists and activists in recent years. This is a sad reminder of the extent to which the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities are willing to weaponize the law to silence dissent and other legitimate expressions of opinion. When the law was imposed in 2020, UN experts warned that its broadly defied offences could lead to its arbitrary interpretation and enforcement to undermine human rights. With the trial of journalist, publisher and pro-democracy activist Mr. Jimmy Lai, now 77, those warnings have become an alarming reality. Mr. Lai is accused of sedition said to arise out of his journalism. The ordinary actions of a media owner and writer are being treated as crimes. He is also being accused of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces for discussing democracy with parliamentarians and raising concern about human rights abuses. These are not crimes. These are legitimate actions protected under



international law. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has found Mr. Lai is arbitrarily detained, is being denied his fundamental right to a fair trial. Targeted because of his exercise of his right to freedom of expression, he should never have been prosecuted and should be immediately released. International Pen thanks the Special Rapporteur for raising this case with China and Hong Kong. It calls on China and Hong Kong to respect human rights, repeal its draconian national security laws and to immediately release Mr. Lai.

Privacy International welcomes the SR's report. The securitisation of international borders has shifted gear with every new major geopolitical development, further strengthening this trend of uncontrollably expanding surveillance. Among others, regional and international organisations are supporting the expansion of border surveillance in the name of countering terrorism. Firstly, Privacy International documented how the EU supports surveillance capacities of third countries, including financing procurement of surveillance technologies without adequate human rights due diligence, as the European Ombudsman confirmed. Numerous projects funded by the EU Trust Fund for Africa, present urgent threats to privacy, including developing biometric databases in West Africa and supporting the expansion of Interpol's interoperable policing and biometric databases, training state security units in surveillance and providing them surveillance equipment. Secondly, the processing of travellers' personal data in the name of countering terrorism is ramping up in scope, purpose and technical capabilities. The human rights consequences of indiscriminate traveller surveillance can be serious and affect the rights to privacy, freedom of movement, to seek asylum and freedom from arbitrary arrests. The UN Countering Terrorist Travel Programme offers states a purpose-made software called [goTravel](#). Privacy International shares concerns expressed by the mandate on this programme and have documented how it has not demonstrated compliance with the UN human rights due diligence policy. As these examples show, regional and international organisations are falling short in their human rights due diligence when offering surveillance support in the name of countering terrorism. Privacy International welcomes the SR's views on how to address these failings.

International Pro Bono Legal Services Association states that the national security case of Jimmy Lai is not emblematic of the wider situation of the freedoms of speech or assembly in Hong Kong. Mr. Lai neither represents the people of Hong Kong nor can he be described as a journalist. He is first and foremost a businessman, a politician, a billionaire media mogul whose experiences and privileges are far removed from those of ordinary Hong Kong residents. Mr. Lai is a British citizen who at the height of Hong Kong's protests met with senior US officials including Mike Pence, Mike Pompeo and John Bolton which distinguished his role within the protest movement. While many special rapporteurs have raised Mr. Lai's case for official communications, this heightened attention is largely a result of his considerable wealth which allows him to employ an extensive team of international lawyers and media advocates. His ability to access justice and garner international media coverage is inherently unequal to the common people. Meanwhile, ordinary Hong-Kongers such as those who relocated to the UK under the BNO visa scheme remain overlooked at this council as they face threats to the civil and political rights while ostensibly under the care of the British government. The UNHRC must focus on the needs of the wider Hong Kong community rather than prioritising the case of a billionaire who enjoys significant resources and influence. Its mission should be to protect the rights of the everyday people especially those without the means to advocate for themselves on the global stage.



The **International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)** welcomes the SR's recommendations on civil society engagement in regional systems. In this connection, the ICJ draws the UNHRC's attention to counterterrorism laws which serve to violate human rights and fundamental freedoms of civil society actors in Venezuela and Eswatini. In its work on Venezuela, the ICJ has identified the widespread use of anti-terrorism legislation and judicial procedures to prosecute dissent and other expression on spurious charges. Courts lacking in impartiality and independence have failed to respect fair trial rights in the political opposition, human rights defenders, and journalists. Some have been arbitrarily detained in what amounts to a practise of short-term enforced disappearances. In Eswatini, the Suppression of Terrorism Act enables the Swazi authorities to undermine freedom of expression including political dissent. The law in its current form serves to impair the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. The act is overly broad and vague in formulation and authorities have frequently used it to arbitrarily arrest and prosecute human rights defenders and suppress media and to brand political activists and journalists as terrorists. The Supreme Court of Eswatini recently upheld both the Suppression of Terrorism Act and provisions of the 1938 Sedition and Subversive Activities Act which similarly has adverse human rights implications.

According to the **International Federation of Journalists**, the weaponization of national security and counter-terror laws sees courageous truth-tellers silenced by imprisonment and prosecution. Most renowned among them is Mr. Jimmy Lai, a 77-year-old journalist, democracy campaigner, media entrepreneur, and founder of Apple Daily, the most popular Chinese language newspaper in Hong Kong and a voice for democracy and freedom in the region. Armed with the widely condemned national security law the Hong Kong and Chinese authorities have a stranglehold on media freedom. Apple Daily was forcibly shut down in 2021 and since then Mr. Jimmy Lai has been arbitrarily detained in solitary confinement. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has condemned Mr. Lai's detention, arrest, and prosecution as an abuse of his fundamental rights. Last week, Mr. Lai finished testifying in his national security law trial. From the stand he said the more information you have the more you are free. For his journalism and peaceful campaigning Mr. Lai has paid the price of his freedom. He is caught in the web of overbroad offences in the national security law that operate to suppress free speech and criminalise dissent but these are not crimes they are activities protected by international law. The International Federation of Journalists calls on China and Hong Kong to release Mr. Jimmy Lai and to repeal the national security law. The Federation is grateful to the SR for raising concerns about Mr. Lai's case and together with other UN experts for calling for his immediate and unconditional release, and urges the UNHRC and states to join this call.

CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation welcomes the report of the SR. The proliferation of restricted laws regulations and practises as part of a broader legal targeting of CSOs is severely limiting civil society actors access to funding. This includes a trend of over-regulation of the civil society sector under the guise of national security and counter-terrorism rationale. Security and counter-terrorism laws continue to be regularly misused by repressive state apparatuses to silence HRDs uncovering grave human rights violations or seeking transformative justice. Over the past year dozens of HRDs have been criminalised under anti-terrorism national security and public order laws and arbitrarily detained on terrorism related charges in the absence of due process guarantees. CIVICUS is particularly concerned about the



introduction of new terrorist financing laws to target humanitarian workers and activists in all regions counter-terror laws that could disproportionately harm freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association have been proposed or enacted whilst the concerning trend of foreign agents legislation continues to sweep across several European and Central Asian countries. CIVICUS urges states and regional organisations to integrate stronger civil society space due diligence safeguards into security counter-terrorism programming. Furthermore, it encourages the SR to explore the impact of ongoing aid freezes affecting CSOs or member states counter-terrorism efforts and the possible role of regional organisations in establishing crisis intervention funds for independent CSOs engaged in human rights, city and PCV related work.

The **Gulf Centre for Human Rights** thanks the SR for acknowledging the widely recognised benefits of civil society input into counter-terrorism efforts associated with regional organisations. It notes that while the African Union is mentioned as one of the organisations with well-developed standards and process, there is no mention in that category of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) or the League of Arab States (LAS) which focus on the MENA region. Furthermore, the report notes that both the OIC and the LAS limit CSO engagement to humanitarian organisations headquartered in the region. This excludes organisations working on human rights whether in their countries or abroad. It also highlights that all Gulf states and many of their neighbours criminalise the criticism of their authorities and this speech is often classed as terror offences. The current SR on freedom of expression has regularly described these laws as vague and overly broad, leaving those subject to the law unable to even know how to comply. The Gulf Centre appreciates the SR's recommendations to allow meaningful engagement by CSOs with regional organisations as they work on counter-terrorism efforts.

The **Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies** welcomes the report's emphasis on the dangers of counter-terrorism measures that erode human rights and civic space, whose findings resonate deeply with the reality in the MENA region where governments continue to weaponize counter-terrorism frameworks to criminalise peaceful dissent and dismantle independent civil society. In Algeria, article 87b has transformed legitimate activism into a criminal offence branding journalists trade unionists and civil society actors as terrorists. In Egypt, counter-terrorism courts and emergency laws serve as tools of repression enabling indefinite detention and mass trials and across the region enforced disappearances torture and travel bans are being justified under the guise of countering terrorism. The Institute reminds all states that counter-terrorism must never serve as a pretext for violating fundamental freedoms. It calls on all governments to repeal abusive laws and the misuse of security measures to criminalise peaceful dissent and align their counter-terrorism policies with human rights standards. As the SR's report underscores the urgent need for stronger human rights safeguards and regional counter-terrorism mechanisms, the Cairo Institute urges the SR to deepen engagement with affected defenders, publicly denounce violations and push for concrete accountability measures. Counter-terrorism must not be used as a shield for authoritarianism.

According to **China Society for Human Rights Studies**, terrorism remains one of the greatest or greatest contemporary threats to fundamental human rights worldwide. Despite sustained global counter-terrorism efforts spanning over two decades three systematic obstacles continue to hinder progress. First, geopolitical rivalries and military interventions by major powers have unintentionally created environments conducive to the proliferation of terrorism. Second, the



persistent application of double standards in international counter-terrorism corporations not only undermines global solidarity but also risks normalising political violence through selective moral relativism. This paradoxical situation is exemplified by certain countries selective condemnation of a terrorist incident particularly evident in their politicised response to counter-terrorism efforts in China's Xinjiang region. Third, the absence of a cohesive global value system has allowed ideological extremism to gain pseudo-legitimacy across multi-dimensions.

The **Association for Defending Victims of Terrorism** explains that terrorism has become one of the most evil threats to human life and world peace. What is more concerning is that terrorist groups such as the Mojahedin Khalq Organisation, Tonda, ASMLA etc with the support of states such as France, Sweden, Germany, Albania, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and Canada have been able to continue their activities and cause human losses under the cover of seemingly legal institutions and these states also see terrorist movements not as a threat but as an opportunity for greater interest. The Association addresses the SR and the international community five recommendations. One, the need for the United Nations to identify and prevent the activities of the organisations affiliated with terrorist groups. Two, the SR must oblige the states that support and host terrorists to observe a human rights framework and strengthen international cooperation in countering terrorism. Three, they need to create opportunities and conditions for the victims of terrorism to play a role in the UN decision making and actions against terrorism. Four, they need to appoint a SR on the situation of human rights of victims of terrorism or to include the issue in the mandate of the SR on terrorism. Five, the SR is requested to visit Iran and independently submit a comprehensive report on the impact of terrorism on human rights in Iran which includes accurate statistics, credible documentation and practical recommendations.

FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

48 State Delegations

4 Inter-Governmental Organizations

10 Non-Governmental Organizations