



ASWAN FORUM

**Concept Note  
Expert Workshop**

**Towards a Comprehensive, Integrated and Coherent Approach in  
Dealing with a New Typology of Armed Conflicts and Groups**

**16-17 October 2019**

**Cairo, Egypt**

**Context**

Today's conflicts are complex, deadly and intractable. While the majority are intrastate, the impact of most is regionalized or internationalized, and involve a wide array of non-state armed groups, both traditional and new.

In dealing with this new typology of armed conflicts and groups, two developments are of particular concern. First is **the growing nexus between armed conflict and terrorism**. According to the 2017 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), much of the growth of the global terrorist threat in the last decade has been inspired by, or a direct outgrowth of, ongoing, large-scale and protracted armed conflicts<sup>1</sup>.

**Second is the emergence of terrorist-governed local (dis)orders**, with some non-state armed actors, including terrorist organizations, controlling territory, exercising governance functions and providing services that are normally the remit of State institutions. Through a mix of coercion, provision of public services and appeals to ideology or religion, these organizations establish control over people, territory and resources.

Combined with the transnational nature of the terrorist threat, the growing terrorism-crime nexus, and the unamenability of ideologically-framed conflicts and terrorism to political solutions, the evolution of this new typology of armed conflicts and groups presents the international community with formidable strategic, political, operational, and legal challenges, for which an integrated and coherent response is yet to emerge.

A significant aspect of this challenge, one that gained considerable international attention, is the significant caseload of individuals formerly associated with terrorist organizations (defectors, foreign terrorist fighters, detainees, prisoners, etc.); as well as their families and dependents.

To respond to this multi-faceted challenge, the United Nations counterterrorism framework continues to evolve, including through the Global Counterterrorism Strategy and multiple Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, most notably UNSCR 2396 (2017). The Resolution calls upon Member States to "assess and investigate suspected individuals whom they have reasonable grounds to believe are terrorists, including suspected foreign terrorist fighters and their accompanying family members, including spouses and children, entering those Member States' territories, to develop and implement comprehensive risk assessments for those individuals, and to take appropriate action, including by considering appropriate prosecution, rehabilitation, and

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<sup>1</sup> According to GTI, 91 percent of all terrorist attacks and 95 percent of all terrorism-related deaths in 2016 occurred in countries that are involved in an armed conflict.



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reintegration measures in compliance with domestic and international law.” The nexus between terrorism and domestic and transnational organized crime was then further emphasized by the Security Council in its resolution 2482 (2019) in which it encouraged Member States to, inter alia, explore ways to prevent, within their prison systems, radicalization to violence, and to promote rehabilitation and reintegration of convicted terrorists.

Earlier this year, the UN Secretariat published its Key Principles for the Protection, Repatriation, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of women and children with links to UN listed terrorist groups. It calls on UN Agencies and Member States to consider criminal responsibility in an individual manner, whereby “nobody should be detained or prosecuted for crimes committed by family members”. This was in recognition that “many women and children come into contact with the UN listed terrorist groups through family links and should be treated in accordance with the principle of the presumption of innocence” and that it “should not be assumed that such women and children are members of these groups or have carried out acts in support of such groups, and such a determination to be made on a case-by-case basis”.

On its part, the African Union (AU) developed what is essentially the first of its kind operational guidance on the link between DDR and countering extremism conducive to terrorism, one that provides guidance on: i) Screening, ii) Prosecution, iii) Rehabilitation and iv) Reintegration.

In its 2017 report, “Journey to Extremism in Africa,” the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) identified drivers, incentives and tipping points for individuals’ recruitment into terrorism. The report confirmed the complexity of economic, social, and political factors which shape “individual journeys” to extremism conducive to terrorism. The report also shed light on the important role of ideologies (political, economic, religious, etc.) in recruitment to terrorism. While understanding why individuals join terrorist groups is crucial to devise the appropriate response, equally important is understanding what happens to those individuals during their membership or association with terrorist groups, and why some of them eventually leave.

**In other words, understanding “journeys of and out of extremism” is as important as understanding “journeys to extremism”.** For DDR, CT, CVE, rule of law and development actors (among others), such an understanding is essential for informing decisions and programming aimed at: (1) incentivizing defections from terrorist groups; (2) handling former members of terrorist groups through appropriate screening, prosecution, and rehabilitation measures; and (3) reintegrating eligible individuals into societies, while minimizing the risk of recidivism and supporting receiving communities.

### The Workshop

Acting in its capacity as Secretariat of the **Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development**, to be held in December 2019 under the auspices of Egypt’s Chairmanship of the African Union, its Chairmanship of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development and Peacebuilding in Africa, and its Co-Chairmanship of the UN Group of Friends of DDR, **the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA)**, in cooperation with the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other partners, is organizing an expert workshop, titled:



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### **Towards a Comprehensive, Integrated and Coherent Approach in Dealing with a New Typology of Armed Conflicts and Groups**

The workshop will bring together a select group of experts and practitioners from a wide spectrum of professional backgrounds (DDR, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, counterterrorism, corrections and rule of law, development, and transitional justice, as well as legal experts), for an informed, yet informal, forward-looking and action-oriented discussion. It will broaden the discussion surrounding dealing with individuals associated with terrorist groups, with a focus on Africa, and advance the discussion about the needed integrated, coherent and comprehensive response to what is essentially a complex and multi-faceted problem. Specifically, the workshop will:

- Take stock of the evolving nature of conflict, and its growing nexus with terrorism, and organized crime, and examine the strategic, operational and legal implications of this evolving landscape;
- Examine the drivers, incentives and tipping points for defection from terrorist groups, so as to inform future interventions and programming;
- Assess the adequacy of existing normative frameworks (IDDRS, AU OGNs on DDR, Madrid Principles, etc.) and responses in dealing with individuals formerly associated with terrorist groups, drawing on good practices and lessons learned from the field;
- Shed light on the complexity of peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions following the defeat of terrorist groups and the collapse of their local orders (extension of viable and legitimate state authority, establishing new social contracts, etc.);
- Identify pillars of community resilience and factors of fragility, and explore ways of boosting community resilience to extremism conducive to terrorism, as well as addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including women, children, youth, refugees and IDPs;
- Explore the outline of a systemic, comprehensive, integrated, and coherent approach to programmatic interventions aiming at incentivizing and managing journeys out of extremism conducive to terrorism.

### **Outcome**

A report summarizing the key findings and recommendations of the expert workshop will be generated and submitted to various stakeholders. It will also be used as an input for the inaugural meeting of the **Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development**, to be held in Aswan, Egypt on 11-12 December 2019.

### **Date and Location**

16-17 October 2019  
Cairo, Egypt