



2023 Counter-Terrorism Week SIDE EVENTS

19–23 JUNE 2023

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS • NEW YORK



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Permanent Mission of the
Republic of Uzbekistan
to the United Nations



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)



BULAN INSTITUTE
for PEACE INNOVATIONS

Addressing the Challenges of Fighters and Families Returning from Conflict Zones

21 June 2023, 15.00 – 16.30

Venue: Hybrid - UN Secretariat Conference Room 11 and Online

Background and Rationale

Following the territorial defeat of Da'esh in 2019, the situation in northeast Syria and in Iraq remains an urgent humanitarian, human rights and security crisis. Several Member States have led by example in taking responsibility for their nationals. For example, as of January 2023 and since 2017 an estimated 32 Member States have repatriated some 3,929 children from Northeast Syria.¹ Member States such as Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan account for some 70% of children repatriated. The Government of Iraq, which is estimated to have over 27,000 Iraqi nationals in Al-Hol camp and therefore approximately half the camp's population, has already returned over 5,562 individuals, a reflection of the Government of Iraq's commitment to return its nationals.² Several European Member States have not only repatriated children and adults but also worked with partners across borders to investigate and prosecute terrorist offenses committed by adults. Together this demonstrates that a wealth of knowledge and good practices exists that Member States willing to return their nationals can draw from and build upon.

At the same time, while some Member States have increased their efforts, many continue to face legal, operational, and technical barriers to taking similar action.

Most adult males languish in prisons and detention centers in substandard conditions without access to fair trials or due process, and there is a need to ensure accountability for crimes that they,

¹ UNOCT Internal Repatriation Tracker

² Iraq "All of UN Framework for Implementation of the Global Framework in Iraq: Supporting the return of Iraqi Nationals from northeast Syria



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and some of the women in the camps may have committed. Their presence in make-shift prisons represents a significant security threat, as evidenced by the numerous prison break attempts by remaining Da'esh elements. Some Member States have repatriated adults from detention centers and prisons and have used available evidence to bring those who have committed crimes to justice. In addition, some Member States have implemented effective custodial and non-custodial rehabilitation programmes and post-release monitoring for adult offenders to prevent recidivism and ensure effective community-based reintegration.

Despite these successful cases, most Member States have not returned their nationals from detention centers and prisons in the conflict zone, so that justice for most victims of Da'esh crimes remains elusive. More needs to be done to adapt national legal frameworks and criminal justice processes, implement human rights compliant screening and risk assessment procedures and ensure criminal justice-based rehabilitation and community-based reintegration.

Despite the increased pace of repatriations of foreign women and children, a majority of those remaining in Syria are children and their adult caregivers. The situation of those children, who are primarily victims of conflict, is dire. They have been stranded in closed camps where they continue to suffer from limited access to food, medical care, clean water, education, and other basic services, while remaining highly vulnerable to having their rights severely violated. The scale of violence, hardship, and deprivation that children living in these camps experience every day is alarming. In addition, United Nations experts have also expressed concerns about the forceful separation of more than a thousand boys, some as young as 10, from their mothers and their placement in military detention facilities and others in 'rehabilitation' centres throughout Northeast Syria. There is an urgent need to address the humanitarian and protection needs of children and their caregivers through child-rights based interventions focusing on their repatriation and community-based reintegration with their families.

To help Member States overcome these challenges, 15 United Nations entities came together under the Global Framework for United Nations Support on Syria / Iraq Third Country National Returnees, co-chaired by UNOCT and UNICEF, to provide comprehensive and tailored human rights-based, gender-sensitive and age-appropriate support to requesting Member States across two distinct yet interconnected pillars. While the first pillar, led by UNICEF, responds to the assistance, protection, and humanitarian needs of children and caregivers, the second pillar, led by UNOCT, coordinates the provision of assistance to promote human rights-based security and address accountability for offences that may have been committed by adults returning from conflict zones.

This side event seeks to bring together Member States, United Nations entities, practitioners, and civil society organizations with direct experience working with adults and children returned from



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conflict zones to discuss their successes and challenges along these two pillars of work, so that others may chart a way forward in their particular context.

Objective

The objective of this event is to provide a platform for participants to discuss their successes and challenges in working with individuals, both adults and children, who returned from camps and places of detention in Northeast Syria, to:

- i) Exchange promising practices and lessons learned in ensuring accountability and rehabilitation and reintegration of adults;
- ii) Share promising practices and lessons learned in addressing the humanitarian and protection needs of children and caregivers;
- iii) Learn about the support available to Member States that choose to return their nationals from conflict zones.

Languages

The side event will be held in Arabic, English and Russian with simultaneous interpretation.

Agenda

15:00-15:30

Opening Speaker and Master of Ceremonies

- **Mr. Ian Moss**, Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL

Speakers:

- **H.E. Bakhtiyor Ibragimov**, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations
- **H.E. Mr. Jonibek Ismoil Hikmat**, Permanent Representative, the Republic of Tajikistan
- **Mr. Sarhad Sardar Abdulrahman Fatah**, Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations (TBC)

15:30-15:50



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ACCOUNTABILITY, REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF ADULTS

Speakers:

- **Mr. Raffi Gregorian**, Director and Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism
- **Ms. Mina Noor**, Special Envoy for Counter-Terrorism of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- **Ms. Cholpon Orozbekova**, Director of the Bulan Institute for Peace Innovations, Geneva, Switzerland

15:50-16:10

ADDRESSING THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Speakers:

- **Ms. Genevieve Boutin**, Deputy Director, Programme Group UNICEF
- **Ambassador Miia Rainne**, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations
- **Ms. Gulnaz Razdykova**, Director of the Center for Analysis and Development of Interconfessional Relations, Kazakhstan

16:10-16:25

PRE-REGISTERED INTERVENTIONS

16:25-16:30

CLOSING

- **Mr. Ian Moss**, Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State

Contact/Focal Persons

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