



# 2023 Counter-Terrorism Week **SIDE EVENTS**

19-23 JUNE 2023

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS • NEW YORK**

## **Violent extremism and families: protecting the children's best interests**

**June 21, 3:00pm**

**UNHQs Conference Room 11 and online**

### **Concept Note**

#### **Panel description**

In 2021, the United Nations Special Rapporteur warned “the interaction between family regulation and counter-terrorism is accelerating with profound implications for both”. Although the legal regulation of family life for the purposes of countering terrorism emerges as a timely area of concern, balancing national security and its clinical implications on family members all the while protecting children from physical and psychological harm is an extremely difficult and delicate task. Despite its relevance, the impact of parental ideology and engagement with violence on children is still a largely under-researched domain, with little data available on children who grow up with parents who espouse violent extremist beliefs. Practitioners in different countries and sectors have raised concerns about the protection of both minority and majority children in many countries. In the case of minority families, profiling and stigma may shatter the family unit and disrupt the child environment, while for majority families, the normalization of extremist beliefs may expose the child to psychological abuse and to a harmful culture of hate and of violence legitimization that alienates them from society or deepens societal fractures.

Bringing together experts and institutions in the health and child protection domain this event will delineate some of the challenges and oversights related to interventions with children raised in extremist families.

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**2023 COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK**

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[www.un.org/counterterrorism/CTweek2023-SE](https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/CTweek2023-SE)  
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## Desired outcomes

Bringing together experts and institutions in the health and child protection domain this event will delineate some of the challenges and oversights related to interventions with children raised in extremist families. It will address child development and wellbeing from a human rights' perspective, examining the ways in which states take into account the child best interest, with the aim of launching a multi-actor international network to produce the much-needed evidence on this issue and evaluate the outcome of institutional and state policies.

## Partners and co-organisers

- Recherches et Actions sur les Polarisations Sociales (RAPS)-A multidisciplinary research and practitioner team, located at McGill University (Canada) Cecile Rousseau MD
- Canadian Practitioners' network for the prevention of violent radicalization and extremist violence (CPN-Prev) Ghayda Hassan PHD
- UNICEF Dr. Zeinab Hijazi, MSc, PsyD Senior Mental Health Technical Advisor (Global Lead on Mental Health) | Programme Division Director's Office (PGLT)
- World Health Organization Sabine Rakotomala, MSC-Violence Prevention Unit.

## Panelists

1. **Erica Harper** - Head of Research and Policy Studies, Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights
2. **Zeinab Hijazi**, MSc, PsyD Senior Mental Health Technical Advisor (Global Lead on Mental Health) | **Programme Division Director's Office (PGLT) UNICEF**
3. **Ghayda Hassan**, Professor UQAM, Director Canadian practitioner's network in the prevention of violent extremism
4. **Heidi Ellis**, Associate Professor of Psychology | Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science Director, Trauma and Community Resilience Center [Boston Children's Hospital](#) and Harvard Medical School
5. **Maurween VEYRET-MORAU** - *Psychologue clinicienne* - Service de Psychopathologie de l'Enfant et de l'Adolescent - Hôpital Avicenne France
6. **Michael King**, Organisation for the prevention of violence
7. **Cécile Rousseau**, McGill University, RAPS
8. **Samuel Veissière**, McGill University, RAPS

## Program

### 1. Introduction:

- Cécile Rousseau - 5 minutes

### 2. Circumscribing available knowledge and blind-spots -20 minutes

- Erica Harper
- Heidi Ellis

### 3. Lessons learned from the field - 20 minutes

- Michael King
- Maurween Morau

### 4. Setting an agenda for the future-- 20 minutes

- Zeinab Hijazi
- Ghayda Hassan

### 5. Discussion chaired by Samuel Veissière