



# THE ROLES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN TERRORISM

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

**PALAIS DE L'EUROPE  
STRASBOURG, FRANCE**

**PROGRAMME  
15 -16 DECEMBER 2021**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

### Introduction

The Council of Europe Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2018 – 2022) foresees the “organisation of an international conference focusing on the questions and challenges arising from the return to Europe of women and children having been involved with a terrorist organisation abroad.” For this Conference, the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT) took the decision to put “special emphasis on the situation regarding women and children with presumed links to Daesh.” The Conference is expected to provide a suitable platform for high-quality

information exchange and awareness-raising on the subject. It will be organised in co-operation with other relevant departments and committees of the Organisation, such as the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) and the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF). Based on the conclusions reached, the CDCT will consider what suitable follow up should be provided on this extremely important topic, in consultation with the relevant Council of Europe committees.

### Background and context

According to the data collected from Syria and Iraq, thousands of women and children are currently settled in camps in both countries. Al-Hawl alone currently holds up to 70,000 women and children from different parts of the world, including the Council of Europe region. The very difficult living conditions in these improvised facilities are particularly concerning as regards the situation of the most vulnerable group, children. It is estimated that close to 29,000 children are located in makeshift camps in the north-east of Syria in the region bordering Turkey. The majority of them are under the age of 5. The prevailing perspective throughout the debate will be the consideration of all children primarily as victims, without precluding the possible involvement of older children in terrorism-related offences in one way or another, and the different roles of boys and girls in this domain. Any possible prosecution of a child, must occur with due respect for internationally

recognised juvenile justice standards. The inclusion of both gender and age perspectives, as well as consideration of different religious and cultural backgrounds, will be an essential element of all the sessions of the Conference.

While it is unlikely that Daesh could regain its former capacity and strength, its resurgence could grow in one of these camps. These camps could serve as incubators for violent extremism and further radicalisation which would lead to terrorism and pose a serious risk to regional and international peace and security in a very near future.

Taking into consideration that many of those women and children are nationals of the member States of the Council of Europe, the main aim of this Conference is to examine their situation and identify ways to comprehensively address the current and potential risks posed, while assisting

States in their efforts to find co-ordinated responses at European level complying with international human rights, including children's rights standards. Hence, the Conference will provide the opportunity to

review States' approaches and counter-terrorism policies dealing with the potential level of security threat posed by those women and older children who have proven associations with a terrorist group.

## The International Conference

This International Conference on the roles of women and children in terrorism will provide a platform for an exchange between senior civil servants from different States and other relevant policy makers, representatives from international organisations as well as academics, journalists and independent experts in this field. Amongst others, it will provide the opportunity to shed light on the roles of women and children, both girls and boys, in terrorist organisations; to establish realistic strategies to mitigate the risks that arise and to discuss the feasibility and major challenges of returning them to, and re-integrating them in Europe.

The Conference will take place on 15 – 16 December 2021, at the Council of Europe premises (*Palais de l'Europe*) in Strasbourg. It will be divided into five thematic sessions. The first two sessions will address separately the various roles played by women and children in different terrorist organisations. It will be followed by a debate (third session) on effective strategies to minimise the risks posed by those women and older children with links to Daesh who are already in Europe and those located in the camps in Syria and Iraq wishing to return to their States of

nationality or former habitual residence in Europe. The fourth session of the Conference will be devoted to analysing the feasibility of re-integrating and rehabilitating women and children in member States of the Council of Europe as well as in other States. Participants will also discuss the effectiveness of existing national practices on reintegration and rehabilitation in this area. The discussion will end with a parliamentary round table (fifth session) on measures taken by Council of Europe member States to repatriate and re-integrate children from post-war and post-conflict areas, especially from Syria and Iraq.

In planning this Conference, the Council of Europe has relied on the previous and current work developed in this area by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UNCTED), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJ) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

## Programme: Day one – 15 December 2021

### 09:30 – 10:15 Opening Session: Welcoming statements and introductory remarks

**Mr Jan KLEIJSEN**

Director of Information Society - Action against Crime, Council of Europe

**Ms Claudia LUCIANI**

Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, Council of Europe

**Mr Luís LEITE RAMOS**

Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

**Mr Raffi GREGORIAN**

Director and Deputy to the Under-Secretary General at the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)

**Ambassador Erika FERRER**

Ambassador Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Presidency of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

**Mr Irfan SAEED**

Acting Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism, United States Department of State, United States of America

### 10:15 – 12:30 SESSION I: The impact on and the roles played by women in different terrorist organisations

**Moderator: Ambassador Kaan ESENER**

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the Council of Europe

**Speakers:**

**Ms Nabila HAMZA**

Sociologist and Municipal Councillor, Commune of La Marsa, Tunisia

**Dr Edit SCHLAFFER**

Founder and Executive Director of Women Without Borders, Austria

### 11:00 – 11:15 Coffee break

**Dr Mia BLOOM**

Professor of Communication and Middle East Studies at Georgia State University, United States of America

**Mr Serge EPOUHE**

Acting Coordinator, Terrorism Analytical Unit, Interpol, France

**Dr Eviane LEIDIG**

International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT), Netherlands

**Q&A and discussion**

12:30 – 14:30 Lunch break

14:30 – 17:00 **SESSION II: The impact on and the roles played by children in different terrorist organisations**

**Moderator: Mr Alfredo FERRANTE**

Incoming member of the Bureau of the Council of Europe Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) and Head of Unit, Family Policy Department, Prime Minister's Office, Rome, Italy

**Video introduction:**

**Dr Najat Maalla M'JID**

Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, United Nations, United States of America

**Speakers:**

**Ms Cecilia POLIZZI**

President, Founder and Executive Director of the Working Group on Children Recruited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups (CRTG), United States of America

**Dr Göktuğ SÖNMEZ**

Director of Security Studies, Middle Eastern Studies Center-ORSAM, Turkey

15:30 – 15:45 Coffee break

**Dr Eva María JIMÉNEZ-GONZÁLEZ**

Head of the Institute of Forensic Psychology in the Ministry of Justice, Spain and the Co-Chair of the Radicalisation Awareness Network Mental Health Working Group

**Ms Anita PEREŠIN**

Senior Advisor at the Office of the National Security Council, Republic of Croatia

**Mr Robert ÖRELL**

European Commission's Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) and co-leader of the RAN Rehabilitation Working Group

**Q&A and discussion**

17:00 End of day one

## Day Two – 16 December 2021

### 09:45 – 12:15 SESSION III: The situation of women and children returnees with links to Daesh

**Moderator: Ambassador Christian MEUWLY**

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Council of Europe and Focal Point on the Fight against Terrorism

**Speakers:**

**Mr Joshua BAKER**

Award winning filmmaker and investigative journalist, United Kingdom

**Mr Adrian SHTUNI**

CEO/Principal Consultant at Shtuni Consulting, LL, United States of America

### 10:30 – 10:45 Coffee break

**Ms Maya FOA**

Joint Executive Director at Reprieve, United Kingdom

**Mr Cherif El FARRI**

Founder and Executive Director of the Centre of Expertise and Advice for Prevention and Intervention of Radicalism and Extremism (CEAPIRE), Belgium

**Mr Manuel EISING**

Senior Legal Counter-Terrorism Advisor, Action against Terrorism Unit, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Austria

**Q&A and discussion**

### 12:15 – 13:45 Lunch break

### 13:45 – 14:45 SESSION IV Part 1: Reintegration and rehabilitation policies (Women-focused)

**Moderator: Dr Kateryna LEVCHENKO**

Vice-Chair of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission (GEC)

**Speakers:**

**Ms Krisztina HUSZTI-ORBÁN**

Legal officer and Gender Coordinator at the United Nations Security Council, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), United Nations, United States of America

**Ms Sohaila AWAD**

Coordinator for Daesh returnees for Lower Saxony, State Criminal Investigation Office and Prevention Centre for Politically Motivated Crime, Germany

**Q&A and discussion**

**14:45 – 15:45** **SESSION IV Part 2: Reintegration and rehabilitation policies (Child-focused)**

**Moderator: Ms Ileana VIȘOIU**

Chair of the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT), Romania

**Speakers:**

**Ms Tiffany CHAPMAN**

Acting Detective Superintendent and Deputy National Coordinator for PREVENT, United Kingdom

**Ms Lejdi DERVISHI**

Director at the National Coordination Centre on Countering Violent Extremism, Prime Minister's Office, Albania

**Q&A and discussion**

**15:45 – 16:00** **Coffee break**

**16:00 – 17:00** **SESSION V: Parliamentary round table on measures taken by Council of Europe member States to repatriate and re-integrate the children from post-war and post-conflict areas**

**Moderator: Mr Stefan SCHENNACH**

Rapporteur for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development (Austria, SOC)

**Speakers:**

**Ms Anna KUZNETSOVA**

Deputy Chair of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation

**Mr Luís LEITE RAMOS**

Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

**Ms Marietta KARAMANLI**

Rapporteur for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy (France, SOC)

**Ms Sevinj FATALIYEVA**

Deputy Chairperson of Foreign Affairs and Interparliamentary Relations Committee of the Milli Majlis, Parliament of Azerbaijan, EC/DA

**Summary of proceedings and final remarks**

**17:00 – 17:30**

**Mr Carlo CHIAROMONTE**

Council of Europe Counter-Terrorism Coordinator

## Session I

### The impact on and the roles played by women in different terrorist organisations

The main idea behind this first session is to discuss the roles of women within existing or already extinct terrorist organisations around the world in order to better understand what were and are their functions and positions.

The session will attempt to provide a clearer picture of their roles in different terrorist organisations and groups from

different regions and with different ideologies.

The goal of the debate is to enable parallels to be drawn between these different roles and to dispel certain myths in order to better understand women's roles in Daesh and to differentiate between those women who were primarily victims and those who were primarily offenders or alternatively, both.

## Session II

### The impact on and the roles played by children in different terrorist organisations

Over the years, terrorist organisations and violent extremist groups from different regions have incorporated into their structures not only women but also boys or girls. In order to continue and complement the debate of the previous session, this debate will focus on the roles that have been assigned to children within terrorist organisations over time bearing in mind that all children should primarily be regarded as victims.

In many cases, terrorist organisations have rarely distinguished between adults and children, recruiting boys and girls even at a very young age. In addition, the sex of the

children has determined in many cases their role within the terrorist organisation. The tasks of the girls have varied greatly from those given to boys. Therefore, the aim of the discussion is to better understand which are or were the tasks allocated to children, taking into consideration both gender and age dimensions.

As in Session I, the goal of the debate is to enable parallels to be drawn between the different roles that children (both boys and girls) had or have in different terrorist organisations in order to better understand their lives and roles in Daesh.

## Session III

### The situation of women and children returnees with links to Daesh

The third session of the Conference seeks to bring together journalists, academics and other experts to discuss the situation, including the legal aspects, of those women and children who are living in detention camps (such as the camp of al-Hawl, Roj or Ain Issa) in Syria or Iraq and who want to be transferred, relocated or returned to their countries of origin in Europe.

The aim is to further a constructive debate at the European level on realistic strategies to determine the different situations of women and children, including the assessment of the risks that they may pose if they return to Europe, and with respect to the response by the judicial systems for those who should be brought to justice for terrorism-related or other serious crimes committed abroad. Such discussions will

respect internationally recognised juvenile justice standards, including child-friendly justice standards, and looking at effective alternatives to formal judicial proceedings that are fully compliant with the rights of the child and are child sensitive. At the same time, the long-term risks involved in not repatriating them, in particular their continued potential for radicalising and spreading the ideology of Daesh will also be addressed.

The analysis will focus on the security risk that these individuals represent - both in the camps where they could reinforce the ability of Daesh to "hibernate" and re-emerge at a later stage, as well as the threat that returnees could pose once settled in Europe.

## Session IV

### Reintegration and rehabilitation policies

The objective of this session is to discuss the feasibility of re-integrating and rehabilitating in Europe women and older children allegedly involved in terrorism-related offences in Syria and Iraq.

Therefore, this fourth session is designed to explore the effectiveness of reintegration programmes, methods and strategies to deal with female Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs), spouses of FTFs as well as the children who were affected by, alleged as,

accused of, involved in or recognised as having committed terrorism-related offences. To this end, a number of high-level speakers have been invited to present strategies in order to identify the main elements and assess the development and evolution of both reintegration and rehabilitation processes. Particular importance will be attached to how gender and child-sensitive dimensions are applied within these methods, strategies, social programmes and national policies.

In order to deal with the subject in an accurate way, and due to the fact that reintegration programmes, methods and strategies differ if we apply them to women or children, the discussions of this session will be divided into two parts: a first part which will address the specific case of women and a second part in which the debate will focus mainly on children. In the case of children, a distinction should also be made between the reintegration programmes, methods and strategies destined to better integrate into society the children who were victims of Daesh and

suffered tremendously from this situation, and the reintegration programmes and strategies which deal with those older children alleged as, accused of, involved in or recognised as having committed terrorism-related offences.

The best practices exchanged during this fourth session may provide, at a later stage, input for the development of guidelines or a catalogue of good practices in the reintegration and rehabilitation processes of individuals coming from camps in Syria and Iraq.

## Session V

### **Parliamentary round table on measures taken by Council of Europe member states to repatriate and re-integrate the children from post-war and post-conflict areas**

Children and young persons currently living in camps in Syria and Iraq are the most vulnerable group within this conflict. Among this group and based on their age, gender or specific situation, there are countless different cases, such as children who travelled to conflict zones with their parents who crossed borders to join Daesh, others who were born during the conflict and adolescents who voluntarily travelled to Syria or Iraq to participate in the conflict and/or support Daesh motivated by the ideals of the terrorist organisation. Within this group there are also numerous undocumented children who may have lost their parents in the conflict and whose situation could be particularly vulnerable to trafficking. This heterogeneous group of children and young persons have grown up under the ideology of Daesh and may pose a serious threat to regional as well as global

security, if measures to deradicalise them and bring them out from the influence of terrorists are not properly taken.

The parliamentary round table will provide the opportunity to address the feasibility, best practices and major challenges concerning the repatriation of children, while taking into consideration relevant international legal instruments, including the Geneva Conventions, their Additional Protocol I, the UNHCR Guidelines no. 4 on statelessness and the 2000 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which all Council of Europe member states have ratified, also bearing in mind a gender and age-sensitive approach.

In addition, parliamentarians, senior civil servants and other policy makers will have the opportunity to provide participants

with insights into the steps that have been taken at a later stage to promote the social reintegration of these children and give them a proper (re)education, health care and psychosocial support in their home countries. This support must, in a gender sensitive manner, always ensure their well-being and the protection of these children's rights in compliance with international and European standards, especially the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

While recognising that children are victims in this conflict, the debate will also include

an exchange of views on the tailored prosecution of those older children alleged as, accused of, or recognised as having committed terrorism-related offences, always clearly subject to national standards of the age of criminal responsibility and with due respect for internationally recognised juvenile justice standards. Diversion and alternative measures to juvenile detention will all be discussed, with a view to identifying which options are more conducive to the reintegration of children and could give better results in appropriately balancing the interests of society with the needs and fundamental rights of the child.

The Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT) is the key coordinating body for the Council of Europe activities to combat terrorism.

For over forty years, the Council of Europe has helped to develop and reinforce key legal standards to prevent and suppress acts of terrorism. Taking a comprehensive approach, the Council of Europe works to help member States fight terrorism more effectively by strengthening and improving their national legislation, as well as facilitating international co-operation. In full respect for human rights and the rule of law, the Council of Europe is continuously working to improve international co-operation in bringing terrorists to justice.

The CDCT's primary objectives are to oversee and ensure the successful implementation of relevant Council of Europe legal instruments while also providing a means for international experts to analyse and respond to developments in the counter-terrorism area, including through international standard setting.

[www.coe.int/terrorism](http://www.coe.int/terrorism)

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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