General Assembly

Seventy-seventh session
Item 122 of the provisional agenda*
The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Background

1.   The present report is submitted pursuant to the request issued in the seventh review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (see resolution 75/291). In the review, Member States recognized the rise in terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief as a matter of grave international concern and requested "the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States, to develop a greater understanding of the motivations, objectives, organization and the threat posed by such groups within the global terrorist landscape, including new and emerging threats, and to help build, upon request, effective counter-narratives, capacities and strategies in this regard, and to report thereon in advance of its seventy-seventh session".[1]

2.   In addressing terrorism on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief, the Secretary-General recognizes the potentially broad categorization of violence that may fall within the scope of the present report, including in the absence of an internationally agreed definition of terrorism. The present report therefore applies the terminology provided by the General Assembly, without prejudice to the diversity of terms used by Member States to describe the phenomenon nor to the question of whether Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and other relevant resolutions may apply in relation to such groups, which are not currently covered under specific United Nations sanction regimes established by the Security Council. Further, the present report is mindful of the concurrent risks of conflation in applying broad terminology and aware of the negative impacts that may result from an overly broad use of counter-terrorism measures.

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* A/77/150.
[1] See resolution 75/291, para. 36.

3.   In view of the important role of all relevant stakeholders in countering terrorism that was underlined by Member States in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy,[2] for the preparation of the present report, information has been sought from a wide variety of sources, as detailed in the annex to the present report.[3]

II.   Overview of the threat

4.   The growing threat of terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief, while not a new phenomenon, is of international concern. Terrorism conducted by groups such as Al-Qaida and Da'esh still remains a significant threat to international peace and security, and an analysis of this threat is contained in regular reports of the Secretary-General on this topic.[4] The present report will primarily focus on terrorist attacks predominantly described as motivated by "far-right" or "extreme right-wing" ideology, as it is the transnational threat posed by individuals and groups resorting to that particular new and emerging form of terrorism that has increased.

5.   While further data is required as to the full scope and nature of that type of violence, some Member States are now considering it to be the fastest growing or even most prominent domestic security threat they face.[5] There has been a noted increase in the frequency and lethality of such attacks, most notably the mass killings in Utøya, Norway, in July 2011 and attacks against two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019. One example of research has indicated a 320 per cent rise in attacks conducted by individuals affiliated with "right-wing terrorism" between 2014 to 2018, mostly in Western States.[6] Member States have also foiled a number of such plots.[7] There has also been a noticeable increase in the United Nations and Member States acknowledging the growing threat. Although many such attacks are carried out by individuals, designation of groups as terrorist entities by Governments has grown since 2019, as they have improved their awareness of these groups' activities, most notably in Western and Eastern Europe, North America and Oceania.

6.   At the international level, General Assembly and Security Council resolutions,[8] reviews of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and the United

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[2] Ibid., para. 10.

[3] The submissions received from Member States, regional organizations, United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities and civil society made reference to, and were complemented by, relevant academic literature. The views expressed in the academic sources that are referred to in the present report are those of their respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

[4] See S/2016/92, S/2016/501, S/2016/830, S/2017/97, S/2017/467, S/2018/80, S/2018/770, S/2019/103, S/2019/612, S/2020/95, S/2020/774, S/2021/98, S/2021/682 and S/2022/63.

[5] The inputs provided by Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism indicate that while several Member States estimate that terrorism conducted or inspired by Da'esh and Al-Qaida remains the highest threat in their territories, many highlight this increasing threat and a number have indicated that this is the main terrorist threat in their country. See also, the UNODC *Manual on Prevention of and Responses to Terrorist Attacks on the Basis of Xenophobia, Racism and Other Forms of Intolerance, or in the Name of Religion or Belief* (United Nations publication, 2022), available on the website of UNODC). Also, as discussed at an open briefing held in October 2020 by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism.

[6] Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, "CTED trends alert on 'Member States concerned by the growing and increasingly transnational threat of extreme right-wing terrorism'", press release, 1 April 2020.

[7] Ibid.

[8] For example, see General Assembly resolution 73/285; and United Nations, "Security Council press statement on terrorist attack in Christchurch, New Zealand", 15 March 2019.

Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, including the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), have increasingly identified the rise in terrorism on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief, while the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech has recognized the growth in xenophobia, racism, intolerance, violent misogyny, antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred globally. Civil society, academia, think tanks and other non-governmental stakeholders have been similarly seized of the phenomenon.

7.   Since early 2020, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has significantly exacerbated the threat of terrorist attacks on this basis. In particular, the combination of increased online presence and social isolation has increased individuals' susceptibility to radicalization.[9] At the same time, the pandemic has exacerbated deep fragilities and inequalities across societies, while amplifying disenchantment with and loss of trust in institutions and political leadership. In his report entitled "Our Common Agenda" (A/75/982), the Secretary-General points to challenges of governance against a "backdrop of a heightened sense of unfairness and a rise in populism and inward-looking nationalist agendas" while underscoring the resultant crisis of trust between people, households, communities and their leaders. Within this context, terrorist and other groups have sought to capitalize on the global crisis to increase and diversify their support base by exploiting fears associated with isolation, social polarization and the spread of disinformation.

8.   While terrorism conducted on this basis has been mostly domestically focused, there is sporadic evidence that it has the potential to become transnational. Member States assess that an increase in online activity has been instrumental in enabling domestic actors to develop transnational connections with individuals bearing similar ideological beliefs and to influence one another.[10] This has been compounded by the digital surge that has stemmed from the pandemic[11] and has included the use of social media and other Internet-based communications platforms.[12] These tools have enabled such actors to build new networks, expand their reach and influence through the exchange of large volumes of materials and resources, recruit and mobilize new and existing supporters, fundraise transnationally, spread conspiracy theories and incite violence.[13] The increasing use of manifestos which outline ideology, motivation and tactical choices of attacks, and the use of live-streaming and other methods of publicizing attacks are further indications of efforts to attract international publicity and inspire similar actions at a global scale. The transnational offline activity of terrorist groups and individuals on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms

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[9] Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, "The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on terrorism, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism", June 2020, p. 1; and United Nations, "United Nations guidance note on addressing and countering COVID-19 related hate speech", 11 May 2020, p. 2.

[10] Information provided by Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[11] UNDP, "From pilots toward policies: utilizing online data for preventing violent extremism and addressing hate speech", 13 May 2022.

[12] Information provided by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and a Member State to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[13] Information provided by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate to the Office of Counter-Terrorism. See Financial Action Task Force, "Ethnically or racially motivated terrorist financing", June 2021, pp. 35–36. See also, Seth G. Jones, "The New Zealand attack and the global challenge of far-right extremism", Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 15 March 2019.

of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief is a growing trend and primarily includes members travelling across borders to participate in cultural events[14] and some indications of travel for paramilitary training or combat.[15]

A. Motivations and objectives

9. The motivations for terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief are varied and specific to context. Individuals and groups espousing such ideologies do not constitute coherent or easily defined movements but rather a "shifting, complex and overlapping milieu of individuals, groups and movements (online and offline) espousing different but related ideologies".[16] These shifting ideologies and narratives are also regularly intertwined with mainstream discourse, which may raise questions concerning freedom of opinion and expression.

10. In particular, Member States identified the role of narratives in motivating these groups, including the promotion of fake news or disinformation, conspiracy theories, hateful content, violent rhetoric, incitements to polarization and violent action, racial supremacy, the online exploitation of stereotypes, clichés and oversimplified visions.[17] Such rhetoric may also include anti-minority and anti-immigrant narratives, anti-"elite" and other narratives, including Islamophobic, antisemitic, Christianophobic and other religiously motivated narratives. While narratives may vary, they often reflect common and closely linked themes that help reinforce a perceived collective sense of grievance or oppression. Some Member States highlight the use of conspiracy theories advancing racist and antidemocratic positions that can lead to terrorist attacks, even without actively calling for the use of violence.[18]

11. In addition to harmful narratives, drivers and enablers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism can include weak governance, human rights violations, weak rule of law, corruption, real or perceived discrimination, political exclusion and socioeconomic marginalization. A "grievance towards, and limited confidence in, government" in particular has been identified as a key driver of violent extremism conducive to terrorism.[19] Some studies affirm that domestic violence and experiences of marginalization in upbringing may also influence the motivation to commit acts of violence on the basis of xenophobia, racism, and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief.[20] Individuals may also be motivated by a need to find a new or more fulfilling identity and sense of belonging and purpose, which may also be exploited by narratives which embrace a collective identity and "us vs. them" narratives. Further research indicates that a high proportion of individuals motivated by "right-wing extremism and violence" may be lacking mental health support,

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[14] Financial Action Task Force, "Ethnically or racially motivated terrorist financing", pp. 13–17.

[15] Information provided by International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[16] Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, "CTED trend alert".

[17] Information provided by Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[18] Ibid.

[19] UNDP, Regional Bureau for Africa, *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and The Tipping Point for Recruitment* (New York, 2017); and resolution 75/291.

[20] Information provided by Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities to the Office of Counter-Terrorism. On the particular role of domestic violence, see Christine Agius and others, "Anti-feminism, gender and the far-right gap in C/PVE measures", *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (August 2021).

including individuals and communities affected by terrorism and military or former military personnel suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.[21]

12. Groups that operate on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief, particularly those motivated by "far-right" or "extreme right-wing" ideology also tend to demonstrate intolerance related to sexual orientation and gender identity. Misogyny is often present in the narratives used to justify attacks by such individuals or groups, drawing attention to the intersection of extremism and gender-based violence.[22] Such narratives are characterized by violent masculinity and overlap with conspiracy theories, associating feminism with the purported decline of the family and reduced birth rates in certain parts of the world.[23] These include so-called "involuntarily celibate" (or "incel") online communities that often promote violence on the basis of gender. Such narratives have been used to justify violent attacks against women, including in Toronto, Canada (February 2020) and Plymouth, United Kingdom (August 2021).

B. Organization and activities

13. While terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief are a growing concern, a conclusive understanding of the organization and membership of individuals affiliated with these groups is challenging. Member States have identified small groups of informally aligned individuals who may mobilize to violence on the basis of xenophobia, racism or intolerance or in the name of religion or belief, with little or no clear organizational structure, hierarchy or direction. While the majority of recent attacks have been carried out by individuals acting alone, some groups may include self-proclaimed "militias", who violently resist government authority in relatively organized armed groups.[24] Thus, unlike groups such as Da'esh and Al-Qaida, which tend to maintain highly hierarchical organizations transnationally, such terrorist groups and individuals appear to operate in structurally diffuse organizational structures, disguised in a mob-setting, characterized by a lack of centralized leadership or a "leaderless resistance". Many Member States point at lone actor terrorism as the most pressing terrorist threat in their countries. Lone actors are often self-recruited or radicalized to violence and are often presented as "role models" among affiliated individuals, hoping to produce "copycats" or other attackers animated or inspired by their violent actions.[25] There is also some information about the active role of women

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[21] Information provided by Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[22] Gender-based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual or a group of individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in misogyny, gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. Gender-based violence against women is often present in violent extremist and terrorist groups tactics, ideology, and strategic objectives. Moreover, misogyny and support for violence against women have been found to be strongly associated with support for violent extremism. See www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence; and Security Council resolution 2242 (2015).

[23] Information provided by Counter Extremism Project, Royal United Services Institute, Polish Association for National Security, Global Project Against Hate and Extremism to the Office of Counter-Terrorism and its gender unit, the Human Rights and Gender Section. See also, Alexandra Phelan and others, *Gender Analysis of Violent Extremism and the Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security in ASEAN: Evidence-Based Research for Policy* (National Counter-Terrorism Agency of Indonesia, Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection of Indonesia and UN-Women, 2022); and Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, "CTED trends alert".

[24] Information provided by Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[25] Information provided by Member States, and Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

in such groups, while individuals arrested for planning terrorist or violent attacks motivated by "extreme right-wing ideology" are predominantly male, increasingly young in age and have even included children.[26]

14. While offline radicalization is still prevalent, Member States indicate that the activities undertaken by these groups are mostly online in nature. This includes the use by these groups of social media, online gaming platforms and other wider Internet subcultures to spread disinformation (including conspiracy theories) and target vulnerable individuals[27] for recruitment on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, religion or belief. Gamification, the modification of video game content and the use of satirical memes, for instance, have accelerated this type of indoctrination, particularly among young audiences,[28] and efforts to employ ambivalent and coded language to avoid being classified as unlawful speech. Despite the significant use of online space, there are indications that these groups are mostly skilled in misusing social media platforms and circumventing their terms of service, rather than using artificial intelligence or other sophisticated methods to evade detection.[29] There has been a recent trend towards the use of online manifestos or live-streaming by lone actors conducting successful attacks. Manifestos have often been disseminated widely online and covered widely in media, exposing the general public to hateful ideas and providing possible inspiration for further attacks.[30]

15. While less information is available on this aspect of the threat, some research points to the offline activities of these groups and individuals in limited circumstances. Members of terrorist groups and affiliated individuals have engaged in international large-scale events, including commercial activities such as concerts and music festivals, tactical shooting practice, mixed martial arts tournaments, marches and demonstrations.[31] Prisons have also constituted a fertile recruiting ground.[32] In addition, conflict zones have attracted individuals interested in gaining paramilitary training, combat experience and recruitment.[33] Restrictions on gatherings and travel during the COVID-19 pandemic have appeared to temporarily limit these offline transnational activities.

16. Information available on the funding sources for the activities of such groups and individuals indicates they can be varied and unpredictable. Member States stress that actors associated or affiliated with terrorism on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief tend to rely on legal sources of funding. A 2021 report of the Financial Action Task Force further supports this observation and points at trends including the use of funding from direct donations, commercial activities and membership fees, the use of crowdsourcing funds online and the organization of music festivals and combat sports tournaments to raise money, with some research noting that the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions

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[26] Information provided by Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism; and Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, "CTED trends alert".

[27] Information provided by Member States and Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities to the Office of Counter-Terrorism. See also, Office of Counter-Terrorism and United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, "Crisis communication: global programme on preventing and countering violent extremism", 2022.

[28] Information provided by Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[29] Office of Counter-Terrorism and United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, "Algorithms and terrorism: the malicious use of artificial intelligence for terrorist purposes", 2021.

[30] Information provided by Member States and Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[31] Information provided by Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism. See also, Financial Action Task Force, "Ethnically or racially motivated terrorist financing", pp. 13–17.

[32] Information provided by Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[33] Information provided by Member States and INTERPOL to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

on mass gatherings throughout 2020 and 2021 affected an important financial source for these groups. The funding sources identified appear to be used for various activities, including purchasing equipment, training, creating and dispersing propaganda, recruitment, networking, legal fees and purchasing and maintaining real estate assets.[34] As attacks undertaken by such groups are often carried out with rudimentary weapons or legally purchased firearms, expenses are often low and do not necessarily differ from normal or legal transactions.[35] Further, while many of the funds raised through such events are difficult to detect or suppress, given that they are often legal,[36] information has pointed to attempts by such groups to bypass the traditional financial system, particularly as actors within this realm are increasingly being denied access to services by providers of traditional financial services such as banks and money or value transfer services. As a result, they appear to use tools they have access to, such as specialized crowdfunding platforms dedicated to their cause, and there is the potential for the use of techniques outside of traditional banking and cash environments to raise and transfer funds, such as the use of virtual assets such as digital currencies or cryptocurrencies.[37]

III. Challenges and emerging responses

17. A number of emerging responses to the threat of terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief, build upon or are supported by strategies already in place.

18. Member States acknowledge the risks involved in protecting or restricting public access to and the circulation and possession of documents or information online that may encourage violence or motivate terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief. New Zealand, for example, criminalized the possession and distribution of the perpetrator's manifesto or the video he live-streamed of his terrorist attacks on two mosques in 2019. Further, the Christchurch Call to Action outlines collective, voluntary commitments from governments and online service providers intended to address the issue of terrorist and violent extremist content online and to prevent the abuse of the Internet as occurred during and after the Christchurch attacks. Similarly, Australia adopted legislation to compel technology companies to remove "abhorrent violent material", while the European Union adopted regulation 2021/784 on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online, which requires that such content be removed within one hour of receipt of a removal order issued by a "competent authority".

19. Member States have shown concern over the increased misuse of the online space by actors associated with terrorist threats on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief. This includes the use of satirical elements and memes by such groups that makes the development of artificial intelligence-based tracking and detection mechanisms difficult, as such forms of expression constitute legitimate forms of communication and may not necessarily be utilized as harmful tools. Some Member States have attempted to address this. For example, in Bulgaria, the National Counter-Terrorism Center is carrying out activities to detect and identify trends in extremist ideology, such as the dissemination of racist or xenophobic propaganda. The Swedish Government's

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[34] Financial Action Task Force, "Ethnically or racially motivated terrorist financing", pp. 16–17.
[35] Ibid., p. 8; and information provided by INTERPOL to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Information provided by the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum; and information provided by the Financial Action Task Force to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Defence Research Agency was requested to map and analyse violent extremist propaganda, symbols, memes and other messages in digital environments to gain in-depth knowledge about related propaganda, new developments and possible risk factors. In some instances, surveillance, moderation and the practice of removal or "de-platforming" of potentially harmful content and sites has been applied. "De-platforming" in particular can protect wider audiences from violent extremist and terrorist narratives. However, when disrupting harmful spaces, law enforcement might experience difficulties in monitoring such threats, rendering counter-terrorist efforts less effective.[38]

20.   Additional multi-stakeholder initiatives have also emerged. A number of Member States noted the importance of regional and international forums addressing broad counter-terrorism issues, including threats, trends and challenges relating to xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief, including those established in South-East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Strengthening voluntary cooperation between law enforcement and the private sector has been undertaken through the European Union Internet Forum, which brings together the European Union, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), academia and other stakeholders to exchange information on trends in the evolution of terrorists' use of the Internet. In Georgia, a permanent public-private dialogue platform has been established comprising law enforcement agencies, the state agencies responsible for education, culture, health care and the economy and the representatives of non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations operating in the field of security and human rights protection. The dialogue platform holds regular meetings on issues related to the prevention of terrorism, extremism and radicalization.

21.   While a number of such responses have emerged in the wake of the increased misuse of online space, some of these raise serious concerns regarding human rights protections. Some responses to harmful activities, including the spread of certain narratives inciting terrorism or fundraising related to terrorist activity, may be grounded in overly broad definitions of terrorism and related offences and of terrorist content, leading to measures that infringe on human rights. Such responses may also not be compatible with the terms of service of online platforms. As a consequence, broadly conceived or improperly applied counter-terrorism responses may result in adverse consequences, including restrictions on human rights, for conduct that is not criminal in nature or may even be protected under human rights law. This may occur on the basis of broadly defined terms in laws that are not necessary and proportionate to achieve a legitimate purpose as defined under human rights law and the possible selective de-platforming of specific groups, such as "suspect communities",[39] which may have a disproportionate impact on individuals from specific ethnic, racial or religious groups, including their enjoyment of the right to non-discrimination, and possible arbitrary or unlawful interference with the right to privacy (see A/HRC/50/49, paras. 23–29). Additionally, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression has raised concerns with respect to pressure placed by States on companies to release data or moderate content (see A/HRC/38/35). Finally, the use by online platforms of automation and artificial intelligence technologies to moderate content can also have serious human rights impacts (see A/HRC/50/49, para. 29). The corporate policies and practices of

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[38] Information provided by Member States and the Global Internet Forum to Counter-Terrorism to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[39] Information provided by the Special Rapporteur and the Global Centre on Cooperative Security to the Office of Counter-Terrorism; and *Manual on Prevention of and Responses to Terrorist Attacks on the Basis of Xenophobia, Racism and Other Forms of Intolerance, or in the Name of Religion or Belief*.

online platforms governing access to and use of their services may similarly fall short of ensuring respect for human rights in line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which provides an authoritative global standard for preventing and addressing adverse human rights impacts linked to business activity (see A/HRC/RES/17/4). In this regard, it is also important to tackle bias when it comes to how some online platforms treat content produced by far-right groups compared to content by terrorist groups such as Da'esh or Al-Qaida, particularly as some research suggests less systematic action against the former.[40]

22.   When responding to the financing of terrorism on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion of belief, financial intelligence units play an important role. Specifically, financial intelligence units conduct strategic analysis on violent extremist networks and their finances, provide lead-generating information to law enforcement and prosecutors, and can provide financial intelligence in support of sanctions/designation nomination packages. In this regard, public-private partnerships have proven key to preventing violent extremist and terrorist groups from abusing financial services to collect, use and move funds. Moreover, supporting the development of studies, reports and guidance manuals on the subject of terrorism financing is an effective preventative method. For example, the Financial Action Task Force's first report on ethnically or racially motivated terrorism financing[41] and the UNODC *Manual on Prevention of and Responses to Terrorist Attacks on the Basis of Xenophobia, Racism and Other Forms of Intolerance, or in the Name of Religion or Belief*, published in 2022, are illustrative examples. Additionally, several Member States developed and used risk indicators specific to this type of terrorism and a list of symbols used by these groups to enhance the detection of terrorist financing.

23.   In keeping with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the General Assembly resolution on the Strategy's seventh review, a number of emerging responses to the threat of terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief, build upon whole-of-society prevention strategies, engaging with civil society and individuals. In this regard, some practices encourage the specific involvement of former violent extremists and terrorists, survivors and victims of terrorism and victims' organizations, religious leaders, young leaders and charities, to help promote inclusion, tolerance and respect. In Europe, the European Union's whole-of-society approaches in prevention strategies include resilience-building for communities and individuals and rehabilitation and reintegration into society. In some countries, emerging whole-of-society prevention practices include committing to intercultural and interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding.[42] In the United Republic of Tanzania, for instance, religious leaders have been meeting regularly through inter-religious councils, and such meetings have constituted a vital step towards easing the tension and differences among different religious groups in the country. Saudi Arabia has held a dialogue to promote tolerance and acceptance, including through the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue and King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue.[43] Focused on the role of youth in preventing religiously motivated violent extremism conducive to terrorism, Singapore has conducted several interfaith activities involving young persons to foster intercultural exchanges and strengthen social cohesion towards the

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[40] Muslim Advocates and Global Project against Hate and Extremism, "Complicit: the human cost of Facebook's disregard for Muslim life", 2020.

[41] See, Financial Action Task Force, "Ethnically or racially motivated terrorist financing".

[42] See, United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, "Global south initiatives to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism: handbook", 2022.

[43] Information provided by Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

promotion of racial and religious harmony. In Somalia, UNDP established a country-wide network of like-minded religious leaders, working closely with the Government to reduce the spread of violent extremist content and establishing a network of mosques to disseminate accurate information on the COVID-19 pandemic to communities.

24. The Empowering Dialogue and Interfaith Networks project, implemented by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre within the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, engaged young religious leaders, faith actors and young media makers in peer-to-peer capacity-building training focused on using religion and interfaith dialogue on social media to defuse sectarian tensions, counter terrorist narratives and promote social cohesion across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and the Camden Principles on Freedom of Expression and Equality further offer a framework to address discrimination and incitement to hatred.

25. Member States, including Algeria, Germany, the Maldives, Philippines, Senegal and Slovenia, further highlighted the importance of establishing robust national-level strategies and plans of action to identify and address the changing and complex security environment challenges, as well as the application of existing criminal codes and procedures, where applicable. Some Member States specifically highlighted the importance of education and training, and focus on supporting educators and professionals to learn about the threat of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, in order to strengthen their critical thinking and provide them with the necessary skills to tackle the threat.[44] The United States of America has also led efforts in educational, training and screening projects designed to prevent the infiltration of violent elements into the military and law enforcement bodies.[45] In Norway, education on violent extremism conducive to terrorism and cooperation at the local level between researchers, organizations and community members have been key contributors to preventive efforts.[46]

26. Listings, designations or proscription practices have been a major disruption tool used by some Member States to prevent and counter terrorism on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief. Some States have listed entities accused of either promoting or conducting violence on the basis of xenophobia, racism, religion and other forms of intolerance. While the bases for and implications of listing a group or entity may vary according to national provisions, listed groups may be prevented from directly accessing service providers to transfer funds to their supporters, may have their assets frozen, or even be subject to seizure and forfeiture. In this regard, the proscription of organizations and their members or associated individuals should be "based on clear criteria, and with an appropriate, explicit and uniformly applied standard of evidence, as well as an effective, accessible and independent mechanism of review".[47]

27. Finally, the expansive and varied terminology to categorize terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief, poses a number of challenges that may have an impact on States'

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[44] Information provided by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[45] Information provided by Member States to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for *Human Rights, Human Rights, Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism*, Fact Sheet, No. 32 (Geneva, 2008), p. 39; and Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, "Basic human rights reference guide: proscription of organizations in the context of countering terrorism", June 2021.

abilities to effectively respond to the threat, while raising the risks of an overly broad use of counter-terrorism measures,[48] resulting in a negative impact on human rights. Differences in terminology such as "terrorism" and "violent extremism conducive to terrorism", which vary greatly between jurisdictions, may also hinder collaborative responses beyond borders. This includes difficulties in mutual legal assistance (one of the primary methods for obtaining evidence), third-party requests for asset freezing, potential multilateral listing practices and information sharing, all of which may cause risky delays given the constantly evolving transborder threats, including in the online space.[49] Further, the lack of clarity in definitions means that applying counter-terrorism measures to the threat could be under- or overinclusive, punishing behaviours which should not be subject to criminalization or may even be protected under international human rights law.[50] The lack of common or shared terminology may also have an impact on determining who is a victim of such terrorist attacks, limiting the possibilities for access to redress, including assistance, justice or reparations for victims and their families. As States define and classify these types of violent acts differently in their domestic legislations, as terrorist offences, hate crimes or racially motivated attacks, shared understanding and coordinated responses across regions are challenging.

IV. Concluding observations

28.   The rising threat posed by terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism or intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief, has been identified as a concern by a number of Member States. While such terrorism remains primarily domestic in focus, the motives, inspiration and goals underpinning such attacks are increasingly shared transnationally. Information suggests that such groups have increased their efforts online to form new connections, misuse the Internet and social media to exploit grievances and spread hateful narratives across borders, undermining inclusive and resilient societies. However, the emerging nature of the threat and the current lack of rigorous data and studies on its breadth and scope, presents challenges and requires further research.

29.   It is the primary responsibility of Member States to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief while ensuring compliance with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law. Some Member States have taken measures to address this rising threat, many of which present constructive ways forward, particularly when applying whole-of-society approaches, promoting intercultural and interreligious platforms and dialogues and engagement with civil society, and strengthening legal responses, including on listings and financial assets. However, given the nature and scope of the threat, much more needs to be done to better understand its transnational linkages, especially in countries where the risk of terrorist acts emanating from xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief is more acute compared to other places. I strongly encourage Member States to develop and implement comprehensive national plans to address the threat of terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance or in the name of religion or belief. The opportunity presents itself for an introspection at the national level. I also encourage Member States to further develop international cooperation through the sharing of expertise and resources in this area.

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[48] See A/HRC/33/39, paras. 21 and 24; A/74/270, paras. 35–38; and A/HRC/50/49, paras. 15 and 31.

[49] Financial Action Task Force, "Ethnically or racially motivated terrorist financing", pp. 33–35.

[50] Information provided by Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entity to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Annex

Supplementary information: submissions received by the Secretariat from Member States and regional organizations, United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities and civil society

The Secretariat has received information from the European Union and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the following 35 Member States concerning their understanding of the of the motivations, objectives and organization of and threat posed by such groups within the global terrorist landscape, upon request from the Office of Counter-Terrorism: Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Cuba, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mauritania, Mexico, Norway, Panama, the Philippines, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America. In response to a global call for inputs, the Office of Counter-Terrorism also received contributions from the Global Counterterrorism Forum, 12 United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, including a joint submission by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, and inputs from more than 20 civil society organizations.

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