



unicri

advancing security, serving justice,
building peace

UNICRI effort to deal with radicalization

Mr. Sandro Calvani

**(At International Conference on “Terrorism: Dimensions,
Threats and Countermeasures”, Tunis, 15-17 November 2007)**

Excellencies, delegates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to express my gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Tunisian Republic, for hosting the International Conference on “Terrorism: Dimensions, Threats and Counter-measures,” in Tunis.

I am very honored to have been invited here and to have the possibility of addressing this distinguished audience in my capacity as Director of the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).

INTRODUCTION

Addressing radicalization and extremism that lead to terrorism is one of the priorities of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy. The strategic document approved by the General Assembly (A/RES/60/288) provides the main pillars for a common global action by inviting Member States to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

In particular, the Plan of Action of the strategy recognizes the need to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism through the successful pursuit and reinforcement of development and social inclusion agendas at every level as a key ingredient to reduce marginalization and the subsequent sense of victimization that propels extremism and the recruitment of terrorists.

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES IN VARIOUS REGIONS OF THE WORLD

Multiculturalism has come under severe strain in recent years.

Addressing radicalization and extremism that lead to terrorism is not exclusively about any culture; it is relevant wherever there are ethnic, national and religious minorities, or migration, and applies wherever social and other inequality and injustice are found.

Events of recent years have exaggerated mutual suspicion, fear and misunderstanding between Islamic and Western societies. As mentioned on Wilton Park Conference's report (WPS06/27) from 2006, "fear and hatred of Muslims in Europe, often referred to as *Islamophobia*, and a similar growth in anti-western sentiments in Muslim majority countries, fed by perceptions of bias in US and European policies in the Middle East region, have been rising."

Therefore, stereotyping and prejudice arise when there is marginalization and alienation, primarily among minorities. The Alliance of Civilizations, a **United Nations Secretary-General** initiative intended to galvanize collective action across diverse societies in order to combat **extremism**, overcome cultural and social barriers between

mainly the **Western** and predominantly **Muslim worlds**, has been seeking to counter this trend by establishing a paradigm of mutual respect between civilizations and cultures.

Policy response to the issues we face must be based on recognition, respect and inclusion; hence, obstacles and challenges on the road to successfully implementing the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy should be recognized and overcome.

Three issues need priority attention:

Firstly, some States do not have sufficient capacities to address conditions which are conducive to radicalization due to scarce financial and political resources, poor knowledge of radical ideologies and unresolved internal conflicts and fragmentation.

Secondly, the propaganda of radical and terrorist groups can successfully exploit States' vulnerabilities in order to recruit young people. This is the case where radical groups use unresolved conflicts and transform them into religious ones, or where they are able to offer strong socio-financial support as well as an "ideological purpose" to vulnerable individuals.

Thirdly, another obstacle lies in the complexity and diversity of factors such as unemployment, social exclusion, conflicts between generations, identity crises, distrust in the government and negative media coverage that render young people vulnerable to radical propaganda.

The complexity of the problem is furthered when these factors interrelate.

Moreover, International and Regional Organizations which work on the issue of radicalization should ensure to apply approaches that fully consider the socio-cultural complexity necessary to make local communities protagonist of a cultural change.

Keeping all these issues in mind, the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy can learn from the past, especially from States with extensive experience in attempting to confront radicalization.

Past experience can help policymakers understand how to redirect people's energy to serving the community instead of the global radical movement. Acquired expertise on the modus-operandi of radical groups in terms of propaganda can also offer States relevant information on where, how, and whom such groups recruit.

Some countries also have learned how to monitor radicalization processes and identify early warning signs through intelligence gathering techniques.

WORKING GROUP ON “ADDRESSING RADICALIZATION AND EXTREMISM THAT LEAD TO TERRORISM”

The CTITF Working Group “Addressing Radicalization and Extremism that lead to Terrorism” has identified its role in the following terms:

The Group only intends to look at radicalization and extremism in so far as they may be precursors to terrorism, working on the basis that only a very small minority of individuals may move from being extremists to condoning or committing acts of terrorism.

According to its work plan, the Group on “Addressing Radicalization and Extremism that lead to Terrorism” will:

- i. Offer Member States assistance in addressing the background to radicalization and extremism that leads to terrorism.
- ii. Offer Member States ideas for undermining the appeal of today's terrorism.
- iii. Survey Member State initiatives designed to de-radicalize those who support terrorist groups.

The implementation of the Strategy in this field therefore can identify two main steps:

- Technical solutions that can support the de-radicalization efforts of Member States in the mid-term, and
- Inputs into the debate related to the social context in the longer-term.

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, strongly believes that the UN and the CTITF can play a catalytic role by bringing added value to the on-going activities at national, regional and international level in this field.

In particular, the CTITF, through its Working Groups, can act as a facilitator by involving all the entities working in the field, effectively spreading and widely communicating UN values and providing Member States with concrete means of intervention.

CONCLUSION

I am strongly convinced that the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, specifically the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Task Force, represents a milestone in the contribution that the UN can provide to the fight against radicalization that leads to terrorism.

Finally, I would like to support the Alliance of Civilizations as a positive initiative, which seeks to forge political will and to mobilize concerted action at the institutional and civil society levels to overcome the prejudice, misperceptions and polarization that militate against a broad consensus across nations, cultures, and religions.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION