

Disarmament and International Security (DISEC)

Preventing Terrorist Group Recruitment in the Middle East



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January 2022

Committee Overview

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), established in 1945, is the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) with the core working principles revolving around maintaining international security and peace and advocating, debating and solving issues that threaten global peace. As stated in the United Nations Chapter IV, Article 11, the mandate of the DISEC is to disarm world's nuclear weapons, to build peace through negotiations, to curb threats that can cause collateral damage including threats from nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction, and to provide a safe and responsible mechanism that prevents the development of nuclear weapons. If deemed necessary, the DISEC committee may call upon the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in situations that may pose an immediate threat to global security and may also call upon the UNSC to discuss questions related to disarmament and regulation of armaments. Similarly, like other GA committees, DISEC cannot impose sanctions, pass binding resolutions or authorize armed intervention, however, it can suggest and call upon the UNSC on these issues.

The DISEC committee works in close cooperation with UNGA and acquires its funding from the General Assembly's Administrative and Budgetary Committee which allocates the funds required for cooperation, development, international law and justice, and political affairs and humanitarian affairs. The UNGA-DISEC holds its sessions in New York in the United States of America once a year and all 193 members of the United Nations take part in the sessions. Only full members are allowed to cast a vote, however, observers may cast a vote through non-substantial procedural matters.

Definitions

Terrorism: The UN Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004) defines terrorism as 'criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.'

State Terrorism: State terrorism has been defined as acts of terrorism conducted by governments or terrorism carried out directly by, or encouraged and funded by, an established government of a state (country) or terrorism practiced by a government against its own people or in support of international terrorism.

Right-wing Terrorism: Right-wing terrorism is a unique form of political violence with fluid boundaries between hate crime and organized terrorism. In general, right-wing terrorism does not aim for individual and concentrated high-effect results, but rather for long-term, low-intensity "warfare" against their enemies. The effects of creating horror and fear in their target group, however, are similar to other forms of terrorism.

Ethno-nationalist and Separatist Terrorism: Ethno-nationalist terrorists claim to represent a specific ethnic or cultural group, often a minority. Ethno-nationalist groups tend to commit violence against their so-called rivals, often individuals belonging to a majority. Their grievances stem from what they characterize as oppressive action (or inaction) on the part of the government and/or the majority population.

Jihadist Terrorism: Jihadi terrorism is defined in a sense of religious terrorism in which jihadists employ Islam as a means of violently achieving their political goals based on their perceived ideological and fanatical interpretation of Islamic texts.

Historical Background

1968-1979: The Dawn of Modern International Terrorism

The colonial era, failed post-colonial attempts at state formation, and the creation of Israel engendered a series of Marxist and anti-Western transformations and movements throughout the Arab and Islamic world. The growth of these nationalist and revolutionary movements, along with their view that terrorism could be effective in reaching political goals, generated the first phase of modern international terrorism.

In the late 1960s Palestinian secular movements such as Al Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) began to target civilians outside the immediate arena of conflict. Following Israel's 1967 defeat of Arab forces, Palestinian leaders realized that the Arab world was unable to militarily confront Israel. At the same time, lessons drawn from revolutionary movements in Latin America, North Africa, and Southeast Asia as well as during the Jewish struggle against Britain in Palestine, saw the Palestinians move away from classic guerrilla, typically rural-based, warfare toward urban terrorism. Radical Palestinians took advantage of modern communication and transportation systems to internationalize their struggle. They launched a series of hijackings, kidnappings, bombings, and shootings, culminating in the kidnapping and subsequent deaths of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympic Games.

These Palestinian groups became a model for numerous secular militants, and offered lessons for subsequent ethnic and religious movements. Palestinians created an extensive transnational extremist network -- tied into which were various state sponsors such as the Soviet Union, certain Arab states, as well as traditional criminal organizations. By the end of the 1970s, the Palestinian secular network was a major channel for the spread of terrorist techniques worldwide. While these secular Palestinians dominated the scene during the 1970s, religious movements also grew. The failure of Arab nationalism in the 1967 war resulted in the strengthening of both progressive and extremist Islamic movements. In the Middle East, Islamic movements increasingly came into opposition with secular nationalism, providing an alternative source of social welfare and education in the vacuum left by the lack of government-led development.

1979-1991: The Afghan Jihad and State Sponsors of Terrorism

The year 1979 was a turning point in international terrorism. Throughout the Arab world and the West, the Iranian Islamic revolution sparked fears of a wave of revolutionary Shia Islam. Meanwhile, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent anti-Soviet mujahedeen war, lasting from 1979 to 1989, stimulated the rise and expansion of terrorist groups. Indeed, the growth of a post-jihad pool of well-trained, battle-hardened militants is a key trend in contemporary international terrorism and insurgency-related violence. Volunteers from various parts of the Islamic world fought in Afghanistan, supported by conservative countries.

In the West, attention was focused on state sponsorship, specifically the Iranian-backed and Syrian-supported Hezbollah; state sponsors' use of secular Palestinian groups was also of concern. Hezbollah pioneered the use of suicide bombers in the Middle East. Hezbollah remains a key trainer of secular, Shia, and Sunni movements. Iraq and Syria were heavily involved in supporting various terrorist groups, with Baghdad using the Abu Nidal Organization on several occasions. State sponsors used terrorist groups to attack Israeli as well as Western interests, in addition to domestic and regional opponents.

1991-2001: The Globalization of Terror

The disintegration of post-Cold War states, and the Cold War legacy of a world awash in advanced conventional weapons and know-how, has assisted the proliferation of terrorism worldwide. Vacuums of stability created by conflict and absence of governance in areas such as the Balkans, Afghanistan, Colombia, and certain African countries offer readymade areas for terrorist training and recruitment activity, while smuggling and drug trafficking routes are often exploited by terrorists to support operations worldwide. With the increasing ease of transnational transportation and communication, the continued willingness of states such as Iran and Iraq to provide support, and dehumanizing

ideologies that enable mass casualty attacks, the lethal potential of terrorist violence has reached new heights.

Since 1994, the Pakistani-supported Taliban militia in Afghanistan has assumed several characteristics traditionally associated with state-sponsors of terrorism, providing logistical support, travel documentation, and training facilities. Although radical groups such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda, and Kashmiri militants were in Afghanistan prior to the Taliban, the spread of Taliban control has seen Afghan-based terrorism evolve into a relatively coordinated, widespread activity focused on sustaining and developing terrorist capabilities. Since the mid-1990s, Pakistani-backed terrorist groups fighting in Kashmir have increasingly used training camps inside Taliban-controlled areas. At the same time, members of these groups, as well as thousands of youths from Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), have fought with the Taliban against opposition forces. This activity has seen the rise of extremism in parts of Pakistan neighboring Afghanistan, further complicating the ability of Islamabad to exert control over militants. Moreover, the intermixing of Pakistani movements with the Taliban and their Arab-Afghan allies has seen ties between these groups strengthen.

Since 1989 the increasing willingness of religious extremists to strike targets outside immediate country or regional areas underscores the global nature of contemporary terrorism. The 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, and the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, are representative of this trend.

Current Situation

Terrorist Groups in the Middle East: Al-Nusra Front

Al-Nusra Front is one of the most capable al-Qa'ida-affiliated groups operating in Syria during the ongoing conflict. The group in January 2012 announced its intention to overthrow Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime, and since then has mounted hundreds of insurgent-style and suicide attacks against regime and security service

targets across the country. The group is committed not only to ousting the regime, but also seeks to expand its reach regionally and globally. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) played a significant role in founding the group. ISIL predecessor organizations used Syria as a facilitation hub and transformed this facilitation and logistics network into an organization capable of conducting sophisticated explosives and firearms attacks. ISIL leaders since the beginning of al-Nusrah Front's participation in the conflict provided their facilitation hub with personnel and resources, including money and weapons. Al-Nusrah Front has managed to seize territory, including military bases and infrastructure in northern Syria. The group's cadre is predominately composed of Syrian nationals many of whom are veterans of previous conflicts, including the Iraq war.

Al-Qa'ida

Usama Bin Ladin formed al-Qa'ida in 1988 with Arabs who fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union, and declared its goal as the establishment of a pan-Islamic caliphate throughout the Muslim world. On 11 September 2001, 19 al-Qa'ida suicide attackers hijacked and crashed four US commercial jets—two into the World Trade Center in New York City, one into the Pentagon near Washington, D.C., and a fourth into a field in Shanks Ville, Pennsylvania—leaving nearly 3,000 people dead. Al-Qa'ida also directed the 12 October 2000 attack on the USS Cole in the port of Aden, Yemen, and conducted the bombings in August 1998 of the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Since 2002, al-Qa'ida and affiliated groups have conducted attacks worldwide, including in Europe, North Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. In 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri, then Bin Ladin's deputy, publicly claimed al-Qa'ida's involvement in the 7 July 2005 bus bombings in the United Kingdom. Following Bin Ladin's death in 2011, al-Qa'ida leaders moved quickly to name al-Zawahiri as his successor. The 2015 deaths of Nasir al-Wahishi and Abu Khalil al-Sudani, two of al-Qa'ida's most experienced top leaders, has hindered the organization's core functions. Nonetheless, al-Qa'ida and its affiliates in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East remain

a resilient organization committed to conducting attacks in the United States and against American interests abroad. The group has advanced a number of unsuccessful plots in the past several years, including against the United States and Europe.

HAMAS

HAMAS formed in late 1987 at the beginning of the first Palestinian intifada (uprising). Its roots are in the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, and it is supported by a robust sociopolitical structure inside the Palestinian territories. The group's charter calls for establishing an Islamic Palestinian state in place of Israel and rejects all agreements made between the PLO and Israel. HAMAS' strength is concentrated in the Gaza Strip and areas of the West Bank.

HAMAS has a military wing known as the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades that has conducted many anti-Israel attacks in both Israel and the Palestinian territories since the 1990s. These attacks have included large-scale bombings against Israeli civilian targets, small-arms attacks, improvised roadside explosives, and rocket attacks.

The group in early 2006 won legislative elections in the Palestinian territories, ending the secular Fatah party's hold on the Palestinian Authority and challenging Fatah's leadership of the Palestinian nationalist movement. HAMAS continues to refuse to recognize or renounce violent resistance against Israel and in early 2008 conducted a suicide bombing, killing one civilian, as well as numerous rocket and mortar attacks that have injured civilians. HAMAS in June 2008 entered into a six-month agreement with Israel that significantly reduced rocket attacks. Following the temporary calm, HAMAS resumed its rocket attacks, which precipitated a major Israeli military operation in late December 2008. After destroying much of HAMAS' infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, Israel declared a unilateral cease-fire on 18 January 2009. In July 2014, the uneasy calm between HAMAS and Israel broke down completely after three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and killed in the West Bank in June—deaths ascribed by Israel to HAMAS—and a Palestinian was killed by Israeli settlers in revenge. Retaliatory rocket attacks by HAMAS's military wing

and other Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip escalated into the longest and most lethal conflict with Israel since 2009.

Hizballah

Formed in 1982 in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Hizballah (the “Party of God”), a Lebanon-based Shia terrorist group, advocates Shia empowerment globally. Hizballah has been involved in numerous anti-US terrorist attacks, including the suicide truck bombings of the US Embassy in Beirut in April 1983, the US Marine barracks in Beirut in October 1983, and the US Embassy annex in Beirut in September 1984, as well as the hijacking of Khobar Towers attack in Saudi Arabia in 1996.

Hizballah has participated in the Lebanese Government since 1992. With the 2004 passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1559, which called for the disarmament of all armed militias in Lebanon, Hizballah has focused on justifying its retention of arms by casting itself as the defender of Lebanon against Israeli aggression. May 2008, Hizballah militants seized parts of Beirut in response to calls by the government to restrict Hizballah’s secure communications and arms. In negotiations to end the violence, Hizballah gained veto power in the government and retained its arms and secure communications. In July 2011 the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) indicted four Hizballah members—including a senior Hizballah official—for the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, who was killed by a car-bomb in Beirut on 14 February 2005. The group also supports Palestinian rejectionist groups in their struggle against Israel and provides training for Iraqi Shia militants attacking Western interests in Iraq. The European Union designated Hizballah’s military wing as a terrorist organization on 22 July 2013.

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is a terrorist organization that has exploited the conflict in Syria and sectarian tensions in Iraq to entrench itself in both countries. ISIL's stated goal is to solidify and expand its control of territory once ruled by early Muslim caliphs and to govern through implementation of its strict interpretation of sharia. ISIL—formerly known as al-Qa'ida in Iraq and later the Islamic State of Iraq—was established in April 2004 by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, who pledged his group's allegiance to Usama Bin Ladin. The group targeted Coalition and Iraqi forces and civilians to pressure foreigners to leave Iraq, reduce Iraqi popular support for the US and Iraqi Government, and attract recruits. The group suffered a series of setbacks starting in 2007—resulting from the combination of Sunni civilian resistance and a surge in Coalition and Iraqi Government operations against the group—before rebounding in late 2011 after Coalition forces withdrew, amid growing Sunni discontent with the Shia-dominated Iraqi Government.

While gaining strength in Iraq, ISIL also expanded its presence in Syria and established al-Nusra Front as a cover for its activities there. ISIL is also known as DA'ESH or DA'ISH, an acronym for its name in Arabic. It is currently led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, also known as Abu Du'a. The group was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on 17 December 2004.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (QARMAs)

1. How can the messaging of HAMAS and ISIL and other similar terrorist group be effectively encountered by existing UN frameworks?
2. How can the DISEC, Security Council and international community respond to the increasing recruitment of terrorist groups?
3. What would be an effective approach towards mitigating the attacks of these extremist terrorist groups?
4. How can DISEC collaborate with other international and non-governmental organizations effectively in its fight against the recruitment of terrorist groups?