



Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights

28.4.2018

RECOMMENDATION

on the role of the Mediterranean parliaments in combating terrorism and preventing violent extremism

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Recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean on the role of the Mediterranean parliaments in combating terrorism and preventing violent extremism

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean,

1. Considers terrorism to pose a common threat to peace and security, social cohesion, democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and to the safety of the citizens and of all those residing in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) member states, and stresses that this requires resolute and coordinated action by states and international actors to prevent and combat this phenomenon, with full respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed in international law, in particular in international human rights law, refugee law and international humanitarian law;
2. Affirms that terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivations, whenever, wherever and by whomsoever committed, and remains determined to contribute further to enhancing the effectiveness of the overall effort to fight this scourge on a global level;
3. Notes that the terrorist threat not only has a direct impact on the security of citizens of the countries targeted by terrorist attacks, but also upsets the economic and social balance in the countries concerned;
4. Believes that in order to combat terrorism effectively, the UfM member states must reach a common and precise definition of what qualifies a terrorist act, rising above political nuances, national context and foreign policy priorities and not associating it with particular religions, cultures or movements;
5. Emphasises that regional crises, foreign occupation, political chaos, the lack of democratic freedoms, social inequality and exclusion, human rights violations, the lack of opportunities - both educational and professional - and widespread poverty could undermine the resilience of societies in combating terrorism and facilitate the spread of extremist ideologies, the recruitment of young people by extremist and terrorist organisations and, consequently, be among the root causes of violent extremism and acts of terrorism;
6. Reaffirms its unequivocal condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, as well as the glorification of the perpetrators of terrorist acts;
7. Believes that a purely security-based approach to the fight against terrorism is counter-productive; notes, in this regard, that human rights violations resulting from counter-terrorism measures fuel the recruitment efforts of violent extremists; stresses, therefore, that any effective counter-terrorism strategy should be consistent with the protection of human rights;
8. Believes that, in order to combat terrorism effectively, a coordinated response and monitoring strategy, as well as a prevention strategy, are needed immediately, and that it is also essential to develop, without delay, a broad long-term plan to tackle its deep-seated causes through the promotion of harmonious socio-economic development,

youth-tailored strategies and investment in education and vocational training, as well as institution building, in particular, in the judicial system;

9. Expresses its concern about the normalisation of exceptional national security and emergency powers within ordinary legal systems in a number of UfM member states; notes that such developments risk, among other things, undermining the vibrancy of civil society and legitimate political dissent, as well as negatively affecting the rights of vulnerable and minority groups;
10. Points out that the terrorist threat has increased and rapidly evolved in recent years in connection with cross-border criminal networks, trafficking in human beings, drugs and weapons, and that, over the past years, major humanitarian crises and military conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa region have created a security vacuum and a breeding ground for the terrorist recruitment of young people; points out that individuals referred to as 'foreign terrorist fighters' travel abroad for the purpose of terrorism, and on returning to their home countries constitute a heightened security threat to all the UfM member states; stresses the need to detect returning foreign terrorist fighters and the need to create and implement tailor-made rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for those who cannot be prosecuted, thus addressing the root causes of foreign terrorist fighters' alienation, recruitment and departure, as well as reducing any further threat posed by violent extremism;
11. Expresses solidarity with the victims of terrorism and considers that priority should be accorded to upholding their rights and to actions aimed at ensuring their protection and recognition;
12. Urges the UfM member states to strengthen judicial and police cooperation and the exchange of data and information in the field of combating terrorism, while respecting and upholding basic principles of human rights and the rule of law; calls for the establishment of appropriate training for police officers in the field of fundamental rights, and thus promoting a converging security and judicial culture; requests to be informed immediately on the effectiveness of current tools and on proposals aimed at stepping up cooperation between the UfM member states;
13. Urges the UfM member states to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the existing counter-terrorism and security measures, in particular, as regards their respect for human rights and civil liberties, as enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Arab Charter on Human Rights; reiterates its firm demand for democratic and judicial oversight and accountability mechanisms as regards counter-terrorism policies; stresses, furthermore, that violations of fundamental rights need to be investigated and redressed and that new forms of democratic scrutiny to be exercised by the Mediterranean parliaments need to be developed; calls on the authorities of the UfM member states to respect the prohibition of torture as it is most notably enshrined in the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which most of them have signed and ratified;
14. Calls on the governments of the UfM member states to continue their efforts to prevent and combat extremist ideology and incitement to violence, terrorism and extremism leading to terrorism by coordinating their action, sharing information and good practices and implementing these policies according to their own needs, objectives and capacities, on the strength of their own experience; believes that the UfM should, where appropriate, support the national, regional and local authorities in

developing joint prevention policies targeting, in particular, young people and the most underprivileged sectors of society, acknowledging, in particular, the importance of women's role and inclusion in the prevention of violent extremism leading to terrorist acts; underlines the fact that discrimination reinforces patterns of violence and extremism; stresses that equality and non-discrimination standards must be complemented by specific policy strategies to address all forms of racism, including Islamophobia;

15. Notes that violent extremism is not to be associated with any one ideology or faith but may occur within any of them; stresses that the exchange of best practices among the UfM Member States is essential in order to counter the increase of terrorist radicalisation in prisons; notes that the Mediterranean parliaments could also share best practices on the implementation of youth awareness programmes concerning online hate speech and the risks that it represents, as well as promoting powerful and attractive narratives to counter hate speech and violent extremism online, and work closely with civil society organisations for the purposes of reinforcing the channels for distributing and promoting democratic and non-violent discourse;
16. Considers that any strategy for combating terrorism requires enhanced parliamentary oversight from UfM parliaments, with adequate means and serious powers to carry out investigations and make binding decisions; feels, in addition, that parliaments should be fully and regularly involved in establishing and implementing measures for preventing and combating terrorism and able to verify the actual effectiveness of the measures adopted, including as regards their impact on human rights and fundamental freedoms, the achievement of objectives and the real cost of the initiatives taken;
17. Considers that, in order to increase the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism, the UfM member states should put in place a permanent network for exchange of information and best practices between anti-terrorist partner centres in the Mediterranean countries; welcomes, in this respect, the recent launch of negotiations with several Mediterranean countries aimed at ensuring a regular exchange of data between Europol and the national authorities in those countries in the field of combating terrorism and organised crime; calls on the UfM member states, in the framework of their counter-terrorism cooperation, to focus their efforts on police and judicial cooperation in order to enhance synergies in the region in the fight against financing of terrorism;
18. Considers that combating the trafficking of weapons should be a priority for the Mediterranean countries in fighting serious and organised international crime; believes, in particular, that cooperation needs to be strengthened further as regards information exchange mechanisms and the traceability and destruction of prohibited weapons;
19. Calls on the UfM member states to improve the monitoring of suspicious financial movements, with due regard for the principle of proportionality and respect for privacy, since terrorist organisations have also begun to explore and make use of crypto-currencies, points out the need to adopt all necessary measures to ensure constant monitoring regarding this new financial tool;
20. Undertakes to ensure the bolstering of national legislation in the field of money laundering, targeting in particular and curbing sources of terrorism financing and all forms of promoting terrorism as well as the criminalisation of the payment of ransoms;

points out that international cooperation in this field should also focus more closely on strengthening financial control systems and public administrations in the UfM member states so as to enable them to participate more effectively in combating financial crime and illicit activities connected with terrorism; calls for steps to be taken to improve the exchange of data and information with partner countries with the aim of detecting terrorist activities and other illegal activities; calls on UfM member states to cooperate with the countries at risk of becoming sanctuaries for terrorist groups, as well as with companies operating there, in order to reduce and eliminate any possibility of the payment of ransoms and to protect their personnel;

21. Encourages the exchange of good practices and greater police cooperation in order to better combat trafficking in cultural property and to better coordinate actions between UfM member states; calls, furthermore, on UfM member states to strengthen their cooperation with international organisations, such as the United Nations, UNESCO, Interpol, the World Customs Organisation and the International Council of Museums, in order to step up the fight against the illicit trafficking in cultural property as a means of financing terrorism;
22. Points out that, since terrorism is a global crime, the effective response to it must also be a global and holistic one, with coordination between financial institutions, law enforcement agencies and judicial bodies and exchange of relevant information on natural and legal persons and suspicious activity being absolutely vital, bearing in mind that the protection of personal data and respect for privacy are important fundamental rights; stresses that the key element of the fight against terrorism is to cut off its sources of financing, including through the hidden circuits of fraud and tax evasion, money laundering and tax havens;
23. Stresses that closer cooperation in the field of culture and inter religious dialogue, including with a view to preventing the destruction of places of worship and allowing free access to their followers, as well as spreading the values of tolerance and moderation, can help bring together the countries on either side of the Mediterranean and create a strong barrier to the rise of discrimination and, in particular, racial discrimination, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, Christianophobia, and the incitement to violence and terrorism while promoting sustainable socio-economic and human development throughout the Mediterranean;
24. Recalls the urgent need to improve young people's social integration and employability, as these are the major challenges facing the region and are vehicles for stabilisation, prosperity and security; recalls, furthermore, that today's problems relating to the employability of young people in both the southern and northern Mediterranean are of the same nature and require responses that are jointly formulated in the framework of an efficient multilateral cooperation body such as the UfM;
25. Recalls the important role of education and schools in the prevention of violent extremism; calls on UfM member states to guarantee the right to a quality education that is open and accessible to all, especially girls, in order to promote critical thinking, values of tolerance, respect for others and non-discrimination;
26. Points out that extremism leading to terrorism is not a new phenomenon; notes, however, that its most recent manifestations, its scale and the use of new communication tools have bred new problems which require that an approach be taken that encompasses the immediate risks that the violent extremism poses to security and

the deep seated causes of that extremism, and which brings together all the social groups and actors concerned by this phenomenon; urges the UfM member states to take measures to tackle online violent extremism in cooperation with the internet industry and social media networks;

27. Calls on the UfM member states and the European Union to introduce effective measures to combat the dissemination on the internet, social networks and television channels of content that incites to and promotes terrorism, while ensuring full respect for the freedom of expression; calls for the establishment of adequate procedural safeguards and oversight of interception and surveillance by state authorities in order to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms, including respect for private life, are ensured; considers it essential, moreover, that urgent steps be taken to protect the victims of such hate propaganda;
28. Emphasises the need to ensure that in the use of remotely piloted aircraft in counter-terrorism operations, states comply with their obligations under international law, including human rights law and international humanitarian law; insists, in this regard, on the importance of ensuring transparency and accountability in this process;
29. Calls on the Mediterranean parliaments to address violent extremism on the internet, in particular by working on incentives and legislative measures to promote the presence of alternative discourses aimed at countering extremist discourses on the internet; recalls that measures to combat violent extremism on the internet must respect fundamental freedoms in order to be truly effective;
30. Stresses that economic and demographic challenges are long-term problems for a significant number of southern Mediterranean countries, and that they have short-term implications, such as violent extremism, both in the southern and northern Mediterranean; calls, therefore, on the Mediterranean parliaments to commit themselves to pursuing sustainable economic development that provides employment;
31. Undertakes to draft a set of recommendations aimed at better coordinating efforts to combat terrorism and extremism leading to terrorism in all the UfM member states; is convinced that the root causes of violent extremism should be addressed by UfM member states while remaining in full respect of human rights and international law.