



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 May 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



## **Terrorism in the Middle East and its Implications for Human Rights**

The Middle East continues to be one of the regions most affected by terrorism in the world, which led to widespread and multiple violations of fundamental freedoms and human rights, including the right to life, sexual violence against women and girls, recruitment of children, and targeting of human rights defenders. Terrorism does not respect human rights and aims to undermine basic freedoms. In the last four decades, terrorist groups have adopted nearly 42,000 terrorist attacks.

### **First: Violation of the right to life**

The indiscriminate killing of civilians contradicts an inalienable human right, which is the right to life enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as the supreme right from which no derogation is permitted. Maat has noted the increasing use of explosive weapons and devices by terrorist groups in the Middle East, the frequency of suicide attacks by armed groups in populated cities and villages, which are prohibited under international humanitarian law. The attacks had claimed the lives of 497 civilians from January 2021 to March 2022, which is 44.6% of the total deaths of terrorist operations carried out in 11 countries in the Middle East (1). Women, children and the elderly made up the majority of these indiscriminate attacks (2). Among the dead, there were internally displaced persons residing in al-Hol camp in the northeastern of the Syrian Arab Republic. On December 19, 2021, ISIS killed six people inside the camp, including two internally displaced Syrian women (3). The situation in the camp portends a new generation of terrorists with ambitions of alleged caliphate, which calls for rapid coordination between the member states and the forces that control the camp in order to return the individuals in the camp to their countries.

### **Second: violation of the rights of the child**

Children are always victims of terrorism, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Areas controlled by non-state armed groups often witness grave violations against children. In 2021, 70% of the grave violations were committed against children in the Northwest of the Syrian Arab Republic, which is controlled by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (4), in addition to other active terrorist groups such as the Guardians of Religion Organization. Children in the Middle East have remained an easy target for recruitment by terrorist groups in the Middle East. In only three countries in the Middle East, namely Yemen, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic, terrorist groups that control parts of the lands by force of arms recruited in the last decade of this century more than 42,000 children, as these groups used children at checkpoints and guards, in operations to support and assist older militants, and on the front lines of the battle as human shields, leading to their killing and maiming (5).

Children have also been deprived of education due to terrorist attacks and indiscriminate bombing of schools and educational facilities. More than 10,000 educational facilities have been bombed and used for military purposes in 4 countries in the Middle East: The Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq, Yemen and Libya (6). 27 million children have been deprived of education in 24 countries affected by armed conflicts around the world, in which areas terrorism and violent extremism are widespread (7). More than 50% of these children live in the Middle East, and this requires Member States to increase contributions to global funds dedicated to combating terrorism and extremism such as the Global Fund Community for social participation and resilience as well as other funds dedicated to supporting education in conflict-affected countries and renewing the commitment to the Safe Schools Declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

### **Third: Violation of women's rights**

Women are at the forefront of the victims of terrorist operations in the Middle East, as they constitute the largest proportion of civilian victims of attacks. Terrorist groups have used sexual violence against women as a tool to control and subjugate them and their families, which is inconsistent with a set of international instruments including the Guiding Principles To prevent sexual and gender-based violence, the pillars of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and its subsequent resolutions that shaped the entire agenda for women, peace and security.

Maat has noted the prevalence of the phenomenon of sexual violence within the areas where terrorist groups are active, and the protective mechanisms available to women in these areas are usually absent and women do not find sufficient support, and they are twice traumatized, once as a result of sexual assault by the perpetrators and the second because of society's reaction and stigmatization of them in many ways. Sexual violence is used as a tactic of terror and of control by these groups over the areas under their control (8).

In Somalia, for example, the Panel of Experts on Somalia reported that a 12-year-old girl and rape survivor had no access to medical care due to Al-Shabaab's restrictions on freedom of movement (9). Sexual violence is a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute and perpetrators must be referred to the International Criminal Court. In Yemen, the Houthis practiced sexual violence against women, and practiced acts of revenge and intimidation against the people who refuse to submit to their authority, and they stigmatized the women who were detained in the prisons under their control with unfair descriptions and extracted confessions from them under torture. Maat has documented that about 300 women were subjected to sexual violence in the areas under the Houthis control, 30 to 40 women out of them are working in civil society.

### **Fourth: human rights defenders**

Human rights defenders in the Middle East continued to be vulnerable to terrorist attacks and assassination in areas dominated by terrorism. In March 2022, three human rights defenders named: Y.Y. A. (35), M. El D. M. (28), and M. I. Y. (27), members of the Darfur Human Rights Monitors network, died after their vehicle came under fire in Jebel Moon, West Darfur (10) because they were assessing human rights violations and humanitarian situation in West Darfur. A 29-year-old activist and economics lecturer, (F. S.), has been shot and killed in northern Afghanistan, in what appears to be the first known death of a women's rights defender since the Taliban swept to power almost three months ago. Indeed, the targeting of human rights defenders, especially in areas of conflict, calls for considering the establishment of new protective mechanisms to ensure the protection of this group in a way that contributes to the performance of their work without intimidation. These attacks are taking place in light of complete impunity and without any form of accountability. (11)

### **Fifth: Foreign interventions and their impact on the spread of terrorism**

Foreign interventions have remained among the most important factors motivating the continuation of terrorism in the Middle East. The Islamic Republic of Iran, for example, continues to support militias operating outside the state's financial and logistic scope, both in Iraq and in Yemen, which had a fatal impact on the violation of basic human rights. The Revolutionary Guards trained Hundreds of elements belonging to the Iraqi militias that attacked vital targets in Iraq, including the international coalition forces, which undermined the ability of Iraq to recover or restore security. (12)

In Yemen, Iran (Islamic Republic of) helped the Houthi group obtain components for drones and ballistic missiles. According to the report of the Security Council's panel of experts, the Islamic Republic of Iran supplied the Houthis with components for these drones through Iranian personalities and companies such as Behnam and Bagheri, two companies that are subject to sanctions by the United Nations and the European Union, due to their activities that undermine stability in the Middle East, or through a wide network of intermediaries

including intermediary companies and personalities such as Parcia Cargo for freight services, and “Gomei Air Services Co” for aviation services located in Hong Kong, China (13). The export of drone technology in general contradicts Security Council Resolution 1540, which prohibits the delivery of armed aircraft technology to terrorist groups. A ban also included in the Berlin Memorandum drawn up by the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) which included working to prevent the access of these aircraft to armed groups as a threat to national armies.

The increasing use of these aircraft has resulted in multiple negative impacts on basic human rights, including the paramount human right to life, and the attacks carried out by these aircraft against civilians or groups protected under international humanitarian law amount to extrajudicial killing.

Maat, therefore, recommends the following:

- Increasing programs to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the Middle East;
- Addressing social and economic grievances that may lead to the spread of terrorism in the Middle East;
- Supporting Counter-Terrorism Contributions to the Global Social Engagement and Resilience Fund;
- Adherence to international standards for the protection of human rights defenders in conflict areas;

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(1) <https://bit.ly/37PUxcc>

(2) <https://bit.ly/3wuI7yu>

(3) <https://bit.ly/39illIE>

(4) <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/02/1111222>

(5) <https://bit.ly/3NdyDyn>

(6) <https://www.unicef.org/mena/education>

(7) <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/27-million-children-out-school-conflict-zones>

(8) <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/93298> P.2

(9) <https://bit.ly/3FM4eVl> Para 129, P.33

(10) <https://bit.ly/39Pw47g>

(11) <https://bit.ly/37Ji2U2>

(12) <https://bit.ly/3PnhPa4>

(13) <https://bit.ly/3Lcq85l>