Security Council
**TecMun Morelia 2022**

# Counter–Terrorism Committee
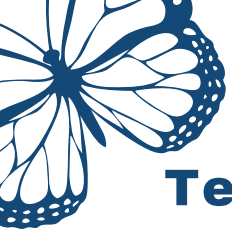
# Committee:

**President**

*Alexa Kristel Corona Rizo*

**Moderator**

*Marián* Vieyra Sotomayor

**Conference Officer**

*Rebeca Barajas Corona*

The Counter-Terrorism Committee Chair, formed by the Conference Officer, Rebeca Itzel Barajas Corona, the Moderator, Marián Vieyra Sotomayor, and the President, Alexa Kristel Corona Rizo, welcomes cordially to all the recognized delegates in this forum.

UN CTC, comprising all 15 members of the Security Council, was established by Resolution 1373 (2001) on September 28th, 2001, in the aftermath of the events of September 11th of the same year. This committee monitors the implementation of the General Assembly's provisions under the assessment of an Executive Directorate (CTED). This Committee has worked to bring the international community together to prevent and counter terrorism. It has focused in developing an international legal framework to fight against counter terrorism to help the States with these threats. Since the committee was declared operational, there have been more than 160 visits to 100 UN Member States.

This committee strengthens cooperation between the Member States to prevent extremist acts within their borders and across regions. It is also in charge of criminalizing extremist associations and enhances dialogue for peaceful measures and prevention of acts.

The main actors that conform this committee are:
- Albania (2023)
- Brazil (2023)
- Republic of China
- France
- Gabon (2023)
- Ghana (2023)
- India (2022)
- Ireland (2022)
- Kenya (2022)
- United States of Mexico (2022)
- Kingdom of Norway (2022)
- Russian Federation
- United Arab Emirates (2023)
- United Kingdom
- United States of America
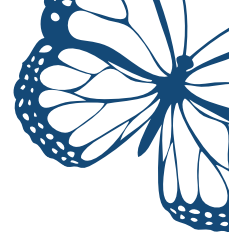
## Topic A: Recruitment of minors into terrorist groups on social media

## What is the issue:

In the past few years, the international community has confronted more and more the recruitment and exploitation of minors from terrorist, violent and illicit groups. Many reports have shown huge rage through this problem.

According to data from Marketing Ecommerce in the 2022 edition, the report noted that the number of internet users in the world reached 4.95 billion people, which represents 62.5% of the world population (7.91 billion people).

Prevention of child recruitment by terrorist and violent extremist groups has focused on disseminating tailored messages directed at potential targets, often defined as counter-narratives. Such messages can be categorized as composing a spectrum, responding to broader or more specific objectives. Evidence shows that different factors can improve the effectiveness of messaging. Those factors include:
- Involving the target groups when tailoring the messages
- Focusing on rapid responses
- Investing in sustained rather than sporadic campaigns
- Producing emotional content rather than focusing exclusively on evidence
- Strengthening the link between online and offline initiatives

It is also important to ensure that such prevention campaigns include gender perspective.
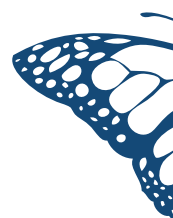
Prevention measures that focus on online content usually have a twofold objective. One possible approach focuses on the identification and removal of content that can be used for the purposes of child recruitment. Such strategies require partnership with Internet providers and social media platforms that have been employed for removal of child hate speech. However, such strategies must follow precise guidelines and be specifically targeted, as the identified content is often not illegal. According to the Human Rights Committee, any measure taken to prevent or remove messages communicated through the Internet or other forms of technology constitute an interference with the right to freedom of expression and must be justified. At the same time, online strategies have focused on the dissemination of alternatives and counternarratives. Thanks to the cooperation of social media platforms and online service providers, mechanisms can be put in place, so that individuals who may be seeking terrorist and violent extremist content are redirected towards media providing messages countering the propaganda of terrorist and violent extremist groups.

Although many countries have lower rates of Internet access and literacy, children in those countries may still be subject to terrorist and violent extremist propaganda through other means, such as radios, newspapers and public rallies. Moreover, evidence of recruitment processes shows that, while terrorist groups may be very active online, such contact does not completely replace recruitment through human interaction. It is thus important that counter–narrative strategies are advanced not only online but also offline.
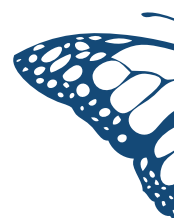
Recent research has been looking into violent extremists' increasing use of social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter with additional inroads into YouTube, all of which are used for propaganda and fundraising. The literature still mostly consists of gray literature descriptive reports.

## General Statistics

- In 2021, according to Save The Children and the UN, 37 million boys and girls in the world were at risk of being recruited by armed groups and government forces. The countries in which minors are recruited amount to 13, according to United Nations data, registering the highest number in the last three decades. There have been 30 conflict situations in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America in the last 16 years.
- According to the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS), in 2016 alone, social media was the medium through which nearly 90% of extremists became radicalized.
- In 2016 (PIRUS data), social networks played an important role in 86.75% of extremist radicalization, while in 2014 they accounted for 48%.
- These victims are denied their right to education, health, family life and minimum well-being, seeing themselves in a constant situation of violation of their human rights and systematically failing to comply with international regulations.
- ISIL and ISIS are some of the groups that have used social media to incite, organize and coordinate attacks. On April 21, 2019, ISIS-inspired attacks in Sri Lanka caused approximately 250 deaths.

- Children of low-educated mothers had a higher odds ratio (OR) for instant messaging and social network site exposure than their counterparts. Being a child from a single-parent family was associated with instant messaging and social network site exposure more often than their counterparts. Children of low-educated fathers or from families with financial difficulties were associated with a higher OR of social network site exposure than their counterparts.
- Every day, there are more than 90,000 tweets in favor of ISIS. There are over 40,000 Twitter accounts actively supporting the group, with an estimated 2,000 accounts interacting in English.
- The Secretary-General states that "They can be trained to use deadly weapons, or exploited as cooks and messengers. These violations cause lasting harm to children, and to their communities and societies. They can fuel grievances and frustrations that lead to extremism, creating a vicious circle of tension and violence"
- The platform most used by extremists was Facebook (64.53%); Youtube in second place with almost a third (30.57%); and 23.4% used Twitter.

## Perspectives on the Solutions

There are various perspectives and actions in the face of this problem and various delegations have implemented proposals and rules for the management of social networks and the information within them, as is done by the Canadian Center for Security Sciences, which proposes measures to stop the proliferation of radical ideas among its users. One of his proposals was to use social network analysis as a tool to identify individuals and communities that promote violent behavior in the name of a cause. Another option was to model the intensity and fluctuations of online activity for better monitoring, as well as construction as a tool to identify vulnerable profiles and address radical ideologies to deconstruct them.

Likewise, there is support from other countries that try to control these actions, as well as the German network enforcement law that sues users for disseminating illegal content, categorizing and penalizing hate speech and fake news. Since 2019, similar initiatives have emerged within other countries, as evidenced by the reference letter issued by the United States to the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT). Not unlike, the European Parliament passed the resolution called "Tackling the spread of terrorist content online" starting in April 2019.

It is important to note that, in resolution 2427 (2018), the Security Council highlighted "the need to pay special attention to the treatment of children associated or suspected of being associated with non-State armed groups, including those who commit acts of terrorism", and that the growing consideration of the issue has led policymakers to introduce child protection and juvenile justice standards throughout the counterterrorism ecosystem, including the Neuchâtel Memorandum, a resource guide produced by the United Nations Office United Nations on Drugs and Crime, and a manual and a set of basic principles developed by the United Nations Office to Combat Terrorism.

The Paris Principles stress that children associated with armed forces or armed groups who are accused of crimes under international law "should be considered primarily as victims of crimes against international law, not just as perpetrators."

In the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, only the recruitment and use of children and adolescents in hostilities are prohibited, acts that imply individual criminal responsibility.

In addition, INTERPOL, and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, have organized workshops with specialized detectives who collect and detect electronic records of activities related to online violence. Its goal is to acquire evidence through police cooperation and interact with private sector specialists to better enforce legal investigations. The program, which began in 2018 and 2019, is complemented by the publication of the manual entitled "Use of the Internet and social networks for anti-terrorist investigations".

## Key Questions

- Does your delegation have strategies to regulate this problem?

- What has been the role of your country in the face of terrorism? How does this impacts the strategies you will implement in the committee?

- Which terrorist group has a greater possibility of spreading in the country?

- How can the government of the delegation regulates the users' access to social networks?

- How influential can your delegation be in reducing terrorist recruitment of youth through social media?

- How much does the recruitment of young people through social networks affect your country and what actions has the government taken in response to this?

- Has this problem occurred to your delegation? If this is correct, how do you plan to prevent further damage?

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## Topic B:  The impact of the Covid–19 pandemic in terrorism recruitment

Currently, the COVID–19 pandemic has amplified the problem of misinformation on social networks with the increase in the ease of contact between terrorist groups and young people, creating new opportunities for recruitment through social networks daily. A report by the Reuters Institute Digital News Report in 2020 highlighted those violent non–state actors, such as terrorists, violent extremists, and organized criminal groups, have used social media maliciously in recent years to amplify misleading content on a large scale, convincing the vulnerability of the ecosystem of social networks and people. In recent years, UNICRI (United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute) has detected an increase in the use of social networks to undermine trust in governments and, at the same time, reinforce extremist narratives, recruitment strategies, and control of territory by criminal groups.

The unprecedented COVID–19 crisis has pushed stories about terrorism into the shadow and motivated some pundits to claim that security institutions are preoccupied with pandemic prevention and relief, and dedicating fewer resources to countering terrorism (Byman & Amunson, 2020). Others concluded that "the curve of international terrorist attacks has indeed been flattened" (Barton, 2020).

Since the eruption of the pandemic, ISIS has approached new followers through extremist religious discourse. ISIS frames the pandemic as a "punishment" by God to the infidels and unbelievers (Al–Nabaa Magazine, 2020b). These include the Americans, the Chinese, the Shiites in Iraq and Iran, the West in general, and the Sunnis who do not follow its guidance and orders.

ISIS' messages underscore that this "wrath of God" cannot be prevented (Al-Nabaa Magazine, 2020e) while urging ISIS followers and members to "obey Allah's command to avoid harm to the soul and harm to others", and to be careful not to become infected by the virus or to transfer it to others.

Amidst COVID-19, ISIS has clearly stated in "Akhbar al-Muslimin", an ISIS affiliated news website, that for anyone wanting to join its rank, traveling to Syria and Iraq, or carrying out attacks in their country is not required.

These violent extremists and terrorist groups use public spaces for activities to attract new followers and recruit active members. Due to restrictions on public gatherings, travel, and movement caused by COVID-19, it got a decreased percentage of recruitment activities in the public sphere. However, linked to this trend, there has been a significant increase in online activities, notably on social media. Additionally, the protests against governments have been exploited by violent extremist groups to attract new followers.

"Regardless of which armed group or organization a child or adolescent is recruited to, by whom it is sponsored, and for what purpose, this recruitment is a practice that directly violates their human rights," said Christian Skoog, UNICEF Representative in Mexico.

# General Statistics

- Since 10 June 2014, ISIS had encouraged new believers in its cause to travel to Syria and Iraq to practice its version of "Jihad". This culminated in more than 25,000 foreign terrorist fighters originating from 81 countries. The largest number of them originated from former Soviet Republics, the Middle East, and the Maghreb, as well as Western Europe.
- Three countries stand out above all: Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen. There, the percentage of children at risk of recruitment does not drop below 90 percent. In Afghanistan and Syria, this percentage reaches 98 and 97 percent, respectively.
- Young people remain particularly vulnerable as they are likely to spend more time online due to closed schools, the shutdown of leisure activities, and lost employment opportunities.
- According to ReliefWeb, there were 447 recorded IED (Improvised Explosive Devices) attacks in Iraq from 2019-2021. The number of IED attacks has risen over the past year with a total of 187 attacks in 2021.
- In July 2021, the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, denounced the recruitment of more than 8,500 children, mainly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Syria, and Burma.
- Save the Children estimates that now some 452 million boys and girls in the world lived in areas of armed conflict in 2020, 5% more than in 2019, surrounded by an environment that encourages their forced recruitment, either due to the disappearance of school life, either because of the destructive cycle that emerges from impoverishment. This same investigation warns that most children recruited by armed groups in the Sahel had dropped out of school or had not had access to the school system.

# Perspectives on the Solution

The Taliban's response to Covid-19 has been in stark contrast to other extremist groups. They have been eager to profess their readiness and aptitude for handling the crisis, hoping to reinforce their political legitimacy and social status. While efforts and cooperation with the Afghan government have varied from district to district and are often described as propaganda, their public health awareness campaign during the Covid pandemic has been welcomed.

In Colombia, various actions are implemented, such as holding clandestine parties to recruit children, threats to families to "deliver" their children to war, and the use of social networks to call minors to join these terrorist groups. Schools often function as a protective shield for minors against these groups, and teachers, despite the risk, often advise against and avoid cases of recruitment. However, given the school closure due to mandatory quarantine, the members of these groups choose to communicate with minors through their cell phones. Added to this is the risk they have of dying in the midst of clashes between the military forces and one of these armed groups or between the different illegal organizations that seek to control the territory.

The United Nations has recognized certain advances in this field despite the impact of the pandemic, such as the incorporation of countries such as Mexico or Algeria to the Declaration on Safe Schools, whose adhering countries commit to avoiding the use of educational facilities as military centers. In addition, a coalition of armed groups in Mali signed an action plan to end the recruitment of children; one more of the 19 initiatives of this type around the world.

Mexico is part of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding the participation of children in armed conflicts, which establishes that the States Parties must do everything necessary so that children under 18 years of age do not actively participate in hostilities.

## Key Questions

- What did your country do to reduce recruitment during the pandemic?"

- Which countries could your delegation collaborate with to carry out actions on this problem?

- How can the government of the delegation regulate the outreach to people so as not to recruit more victims?

- Which terrorist group is most likely to spread in the country?

- How much can your delegation contribute to other delegations to reduce this problem?

- What percentage of your country's population is affected by this recruitment? Which social group is most affected?

- Does your delegation have strategies to regulate this problem?

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