



INVITATION TO SIDE
EVENT ON:

ISIS



Other terrorist groups



The 31st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council
13.00 to 15.00 16 March 2016 Room: 18 United Nations, Geneva

ISIS & Other terrorist groups

Concept note

This side event aims to explore the various aspects of global terrorism and reassess the failure of the international community to take the necessary measures to put an end to such barbaric atrocities against innocent civilians and communities.

The rise of ISIS and many similar extremist factional groups does not constitute only a danger for the inhabitants of the areas they occupy, but it is rather a threat to the global peace and security. This sweeping eruption of random hostilities and its waves of breathtaking violence on the hands of these radical militant groups resulted in the killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians, while millions are forced to flee their homes and countries in search of a safe haven. The widespread afflictions and mass destruction in the region have had detrimental effects on the national security and internal stability of nations, with incalculable costs and external economic impact.

However, for many analysts and policymakers, extremism and terrorism is only ISIS or Al-Qaeda, when in fact, there are numerous terrorist factions that have emerged in the past years and are responsible for heinous acts and crimes against humanity. ISIS and Al-Qaeda are not alone in wrecking havoc of international order. It is evident that the people in the region are fully aware of other actors who are sponsored by states that operate to serve their own agendas, mainly a sectarian one.

These illegitimate entities are often militias that practice activities of sectarian racism, breakdown of communities and forced reallocation. Militia Badr, Al Mahdi Army, Asa'eb Ahl el Haq, Al-dawa party, Al-Houthi militia, and others pose an equal threat in their extreme brutality as what is known about and shown by ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

The speakers will highlight the dangers posed by these fanatic groups at the national, regional, and international levels. They will also shed more light on the cover used by such state-sanctioned groups and expose regional actors arming and funding them, prominently Iran.

The overall objectives of the event include the following:

1. Draw the attention of the international community to the real situation on the ground, and encourage the adoption of a new international position and measures against all terrorist groups; including the state-sponsored militias,
2. Denounce all terrorist groups, cut off their financial sources and resources, and the powers that support them openly or secretly;
3. Analyze the root causes leading to the increase of militias and the role of certain countries in the region in the creation, formation, arming, financing, and training of these terrorist groups.
4. Joint efforts to promote and preserve the application of a comprehensive framework and legal actions to halt such terrorist activities and to strengthen existing legal instruments to bring actors and accomplices of such acts before the specialized courts.

Struan Stevenson MEP:

Former Member of the European Parliament, 1999 - 2014.



He is well known in Europe for his in-depth knowledge and understanding of international affairs. Struan was a former President of several committees at the European Parliament, such as the committees on Climate Change, Biodiversity & Sustainable Development, President of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Iraq and President of the Friends of Free Iran Intergroup.

Ambassador Dr. Ibrahim Al-ADOOFI:

Professor of International Relations and International Organizations. Geneva Business School

Senior Adviser at Geneva Center for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). He was the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations and other International Organization, Geneva, 2007-2012. HE Was Vice President for Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Geneva, Switzerland, Sept 2010- Sep 2012. Ambassador of Yemen to the Swiss Confederation 2008-2012.

Tahar Boumedra:



Former UN Human Rights Chief of the UN Mission in Baghdad

For three and a half years (2009-2012) Mr. Boumedra served first as chief of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office, and then as adviser to the Secretary General's Special Representative for Iraq. He has deep knowledge concerning the involvement of Iran in the creation of the militias in Iraq and also its policy against other Arab countries especially Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

Sabah Al Mukhtar:

President of Arab Lawyers Association in the UK

As a lawyer, and human rights defender, Mr. Al-Mukhtar has been an outspoken person against the activities of terrorist groups, and the interference of Iran in the internal affairs of its neighbour countries. In this regard he has warned in many conferences about the rise of the militias groups which are supported by Iran to create problems in the neighboring countries.





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SUMMARY

ISIS and other Terrorist Groups

The International Organization for the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD) in collaboration with Geneva International Center for Justice (GICJ) and several other NGOs organized a side event during the 31st session of the Human Rights Council in the United Nations in Geneva on 16 March 2016 on the subject of ISIS and other terrorist groups. The panelists presented and described the most influential militias active in some Middle Eastern countries, and discussed the role played by regional powers in exporting terrorism through the provision of financial, military and intelligence support to them, and the responsibility of the international community regarding this phenomenon.

Presenting and elaborating on the most important terrorist groups operating in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen and their extensions in other Arab countries, the distinguished panelists were: Mr. Sabah Al-Mukhtar, President of the Arab Lawyers Association in the United Kingdom; Mr. Tahar Boumedra, Former Chief of the Human Rights Office of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI); Ambassador Mr. Ibrahim al-Adoofi, Former Permanent Representative of the Republic of Yemen in Geneva; and Mr. Struan Stevenson, Former Member of the European Parliament and President of the European Iraqi Freedom Association.

The side event was moderated by Mr. Gianfranco Fattorini, an expert in the field of human rights. In his introductory remarks, he explained that since the attacks of September 2001, the world is witnessing the emergence of a new form of war fought by groups whose only recourse is to terrorist actions as a strategy to destabilize the Middle East and impose new regimes to replace existing systems. These terrorist groups are using all kinds of methods, from persuasion to intimidation, with the objective of recruiting youth from all over the world to fulfill their projects. He insisted on the fact that terrorist acts have been on the rise since the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq by the United States of America. He also stressed that terrorism is a new challenge facing modern diplomacy, particularly regarding how to deal with actors who are not willing to sit at the negotiation table, and how in these circumstances, can violence and chaos be put to an end.

The first speaker, Mr. Sabah Al-Mukhtar discussed the rise of ISIS in Iraq and the circumstances that allowed this group to dominate certain areas of the Iraqi territory. To these extents, he presented the audience with the complicated question of whether or not the Americans and British are really targeting ISIS! The international expert and president of the Arab Lawyers Association in the United Kingdom explained that terrorist acts have been witnessed throughout the world for a very long time in history, however, they never spread in the way they are spreading today and since 2003, stressing that it is difficult to know the real goals of these organizations.

He added that ISIS has committed crimes against humanity in Iraq, as it did elsewhere. He elaborated further on how ISIS targeted the Iraqi mosaic through the forced displacement of peaceful communities and populations, the destruction of personal and private properties, of religious shrines, and of cultural monuments and heritage. ISIS is targeting Muslims, Christians and Yazidis and all those who refuse to cooperate with them or reject their extremist ideology.

In addition, he stated that ISIS was responsible for the brutal massacre and execution of Iraqi soldiers in the Speicher base, who were mostly Shiites, but also for several collective massacres against Sunni Arabs such as members of the tribe of Albu Nimr in Anbar province.

The questions that arise therefore are: what is the reality of ISIS? And how can we be certain that American and British airstrikes are really targeting it?

There are very large civilian casualties as a result of these raids, but we can't be certain nor are we able to verify allegations regarding the killing of ISIS members by these strikes. There are those who question the reality of ISIS, and there are those who say it is an American fabrication, and that the indiscriminate attacks or the airstrikes launched by the US mainly serve to demonstrate that America is fighting terrorism.

Mr. Al-Mukhtar concluded by saying that it is now very clear that the United States was pushing local forces to fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda in Iraq, which could mean in fact allowing and encouraging everyone to fight against everyone. This of course does not address the root of the problem. He mentioned that we witnessed terrorist acts against Palestinians, or Israeli state-sponsored terrorism, in a situation in which the actors are clear and distinguished. In Iraq, on the other hand, the situation is much more complicated and blurry, starting from the deployment of mercenaries during the occupation of Iraq, to the rise of new types of terrorist organizations with the pretext of fighting al-Qaeda, and in a later stage, numerous other examples of new forms of terrorism that have emerged after the rise of ISIS. The only solution, he said, is to fight against all these organizations and all terrorist projects and schemes regardless of the nationality or religion of the perpetrators of such crimes.

The second speaker at the event was Mr. Tahar Boumedra, Former Chief of the Human Rights Office of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), who presented his testimony about the human rights violations he witnessed during his placement in Iraq. In relation to prisons and the judiciary, he explained that children, as young as aged 12, are thrown in prison for different and unknown periods of time. He added that those aged between 18 to 25 stay at least three to five years in prison without charges, and face the ugliest forms of persecution.



Mr. Boumedra delivered an analysis on the basis of his experience and spoke about Iran's role in fuelling terrorism in the region, explaining the ways by which the Iranian authorities contributed to the set-up and financing of militias in Iraq, and the responsibility of Iran regarding gross violations of human rights that have been and continue to be committed in Iraq, as well as in other Arab countries. As a high level UN servant, Mr. Boumedra shared his belief on the fact that Iran takes a direct and active part, together with the United States, in the decision-making process in Iraq.

He then developed an argument on the fact that the United States government administrations are trying to justify what they have done in Iraq by claiming that they have put in place a government that respects the rule of law and democracy while at the same time practices the worst and ugliest forms of violations. Mr. Boumedra then said that the major crime committed by the United States was that of having not handed over the sovereignty of Iraq to its people, but to a single individual: al-Maliki, who possessed all the key powers in his hands, such as the Prime Minister office, the army, the judiciary, the country's revenues, armed groups and militias, and even the Human Rights Commission in Iraq, which the Iraqi authorities claimed to be independent. He reminded the assembly that al-Maliki also owned and ran numerous secret prisons whose locations remain unknown, and that he is accused of a large number of cases of enforced disappearances. He added that one can only laugh and cry at the same time when finding out that one of these secret prisons, which was brought to the attention of the world, was called "Honor Prison".

Mr. Boumedra went on to explain how he has been able, during the exercise of his work within the United Nations in Iraq, to reach the conclusion that there was no independent judicial system in the country: judges are manipulated by the executive branch; the TV is used to present the defendants and to direct accusations against them, then issuing sentences that often include the death penalty. He stressed that all of this comes in response to requests from politicians and in particular from people involved in al-Maliki's circles.

Mr. Boumedra then talked about the United Nations, heavily criticizing their work in Iraq, saying it does not have any credibility, and that there is a need for serious reform. He explained that all the reports of the United Nations Mission in Iraq are released only after they are sent to the Iraqi authorities who write-off any criticism which concerns them. He also stated that any displacement within Iraq was subject to approval from the authorities and that this applies to all organizations operating in Iraq.

He concluded his presentation by saying that the situation has become a major challenge for the United Nations; in Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, and in other countries, vigorous attempts by entities linked with and funded by Iran are taking place in order to extend its influence in these countries.

The third speaker, Former Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations, Ambassador Ibrahim al-Adoofi, for his part focused on the setup and rise of the Houthi militia in Yemen. He stressed that all militias, whether called ISIS, or al-Houthi, or Boko Haram or al-Qaida, are terrorist groups committing crimes against humanity and they therefore must be treated on this equal basis by the United Nations and the international community. He then said that the Houthi militia is a fundamentalist movement using political and religious incitement to hatred and calling for the extermination of those who oppose their views. He added that the Houthi militia does not recognize nor abide to the rule of law.

Mr. al-Adoofi spoke in details about the destructive role played by the Houthi militia in Yemen, which undermines civil peace. He noted that despite negotiations and peaceful solutions, agreed upon through the National Dialogue between the various parties, such as a peaceful transfer of power and the formation of a government of national unity, the Houthis decided to put an end to the peace process in September 2014 when they took the capital (Sanaa) by force and changed the entire system.

Mr. al-Adoofi then spoke about UN Security Council resolution 2266 issued on 24 February 2016 in respect of the situation in Yemen, urging rebels to give up violence and to restore peace and dialogue between the various parties, noting that the Houthi militia did not comply with any of these decisions, but continued instead to commit the most heinous crimes against unarmed civilians in clear and grave violation of international humanitarian law. They persist in their violations by recruiting child soldiers and this has become a very worrisome phenomenon in Yemen. He concluded by saying that peace cannot be achieved in the country before the militias are disarmed, and pressure must be exerted to activate international law and international humanitarian law to put an end to all terrorist acts carried out by armed groups.



The fourth and last speaker at the conference was Mr. Struan Stevenson, Former Member of the European Parliament until 2014, who was also Chairman of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with Iraq, and he is currently President of the European Iraqi Freedom Association, based in Brussels.

In his contribution, he spoke about the influence of Iran over the situation in Iraq and in particular their involvement in supporting and backing some of Iraq's main militias. He reminded the assembly about the bloody role played by

these militias during the eight years of power of former prime minister al-Maliki, and explained that despite many promises, the new prime minister al-Abadi did not take the necessary measures to address the dangerous situation that Iraq is facing today.

Mr. Stevenson said that the unleashed militias loyal to Iran in Iraq are perpetrating crimes in total impunity, executing citizens on the basis of their identity or ethno-sectarian origin. He stressed that it was in fact al-Maliki who was to blame for having opened the doors to ISIS, and ordered the Iraqi army not to fight but to withdraw in the face of the terrorist group.

He added that Iran and al-Maliki collaborated on the slaughter of Sunni Arabs in Iraq, and engaged in ethnic cleansing and sectarian large-scale displacement operations in several areas. He also said that the US policy at the time of the invasion and occupation of the country laid down the basis for the grave violations that occurred during al-Maliki's office and at the hands of Iran-backed militias. He stressed that al-Maliki should be arrested for the disappearance of more than 500 billion US dollars from the treasury of the State of Iraq between 2006 and 2014, making the people of Iraq even poorer than they already were. As a result of such actions, Iraq is one of the most corrupted countries in the entire world.

Mr. Stevenson said that the majority of disappeared persons and people held in secret prisons are also mostly Sunny Arabs, who get imprisoned after the fabrication of charges of terrorism against them. He also spoke about the practices of the Iraqi authorities against Iranian refugees in Camp Ashraf who have been subjected to several attacks from Iran and forces loyal to al-Maliki resulting in the refugee camp getting transferred to Camp Liberty near Baghdad.

He added that Western silence at this carnage has simply contributed to spiraling sectarian war, which threatens to tear Iraq apart and turn the Middle East into a total war zone.

At the end of the event, reports and data documenting human rights violations and terrorist acts carried out by militias linked and supported by State-Actors were distributed.



The organizers:

International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)

International Lawyers.org

Geneva International Centre for Justice

International Educational Development (Inc.)

The Arab Lawyers Association- UK

General Arab Women Federation

The Iraqi Commission for Human Rights (ICHR),

Association of Human Rights Defenders in Iraq (AHRD),

General Federation of Iraqi Women (GFIW),

Organization for Justice & Democracy in Iraq (OJDI),

The Iraqi Centre for Human Rights,

World Peace Council

The BRussells Tribunal