



# MUNESCO

**Forum:** GC 2- Education

**Issue:** Promoting education as a tool to prevent violent extremism

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## **Introduction**

No person is inherently bad. Likewise, no person is ever born as a bad person. Many factors may lead to them making bad decisions or developing toxic traits. More specifically, no one is ever born as a violent extremist. Violent extremism has become an extremely serious threat that endangers those in nearly all areas of the world. Terrorists are aiming to expand their reach by influencing children and even recruiting them. While the world has been aiming to fix this issue using military and security terms, the larger issue of people becoming violent extremists is not being addressed. Many mistakenly believe that these people have an inherent problem rather than trying to comprehend the many factors that may lead to someone becoming a violent extremist.

Education is extremely important for preventing the occurrence of factors leading to one becoming an extremist. "Education is a key tool for addressing the worldwide challenge of increased recruitment and radicalization to violent extremism of youth on social media, in communities, and in schools to violent extremism" declares United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

## **Definition of Key Terms**

*Terrorism:* There is no agreement on the definition of terrorism. United States law defines it as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents." According to Jonathan Andre Matusitz, "it is the use of violence or threat of violence in pursuit of political, religious, ideological or social objectives. It can be committed by governments, non-state actors, or undercover personnel serving on the behalf of their governments. It reaches more than the immediate target victims and is also directed at larger societal targets, and it is both illegal by legislation and inherently immoral.

*Violent Extremism:* Violent extremism is the belief and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. This includes terrorism and other forms of politically motivated and communal violence. All forms of violent extremism seek change through fear and intimidation rather than through peaceful means. If a person or group decides that fear, terror and violence are justified to achieve ideological, political or social change, and then acts accordingly, this is violent extremism.

*Indoctrination:* The process of teaching a person to accept a set of beliefs uncritically. This is a common method implemented by terrorist groups while recruiting children.



*Resilience:* In the context of this report, “resilience” refers to the ability to resist views and opinions that portray the world in exclusive truths, which legitimize hatred and the use of violence. In education, this implies developing students’ capacity to think critically, to learn by inquiry (inquiry-based learning) and to verify facts so that they do not fall prey to the simplistic and one-dimensional views of the world propagated by violent extremist groups.

*Global citizenship:* Someone who identifies with being part of an emerging world community and whose actions contribute to building this community’s values and practices. People who identify themselves as such do not abandon their traditional values, as they make them who they are, but also identify themselves with values that are accepted worldwide.

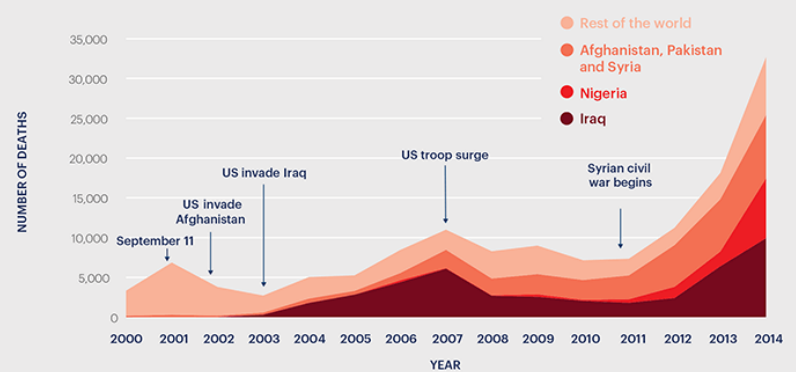
## Background Information

Terrorism caused by extremism is one of the biggest threats to world peace in our modern world. While religious extremism has been a threat since the age of Crusades, the issue our world faces now is one that must be eradicated immediately. Since the September 11 attacks in 2001, violent extremism has been on a terrifying rise. In 2015, 29,376 people have been killed as a result of terrorist attacks. In 2014, this number was even higher than 30,000. It is evident that many of these attacks occur in Middle East and North Africa, including Nigeria, where Islamist groups are most abundant.

Therefore, youth in these areas are most prone to being recruited by extremist groups. Most groups in the region such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda and Taliban recruit children by force or propaganda. These groups even open schools in the areas they control. By using the tactic of indoctrination, groups teach children to conform to their beliefs, which leads to some sort of brainwashing. Children recruited by violent extremists may be made into suicide bombers or spies among many other things. These groups are aiming to grow the next generation of extremists and our role should be to prevent this from happening.

**FIGURE 1 DEATHS FROM TERRORISM, 2000-2014**

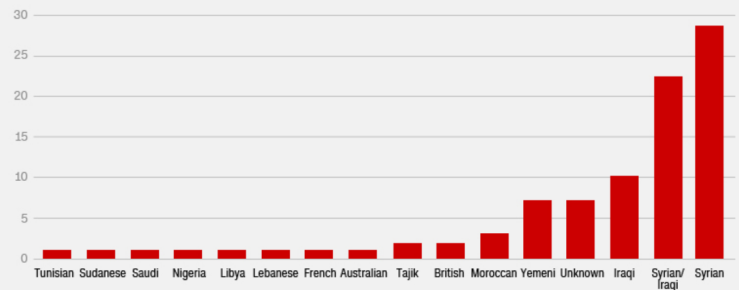
Deaths from terrorism have increased dramatically over the last 15 years. The number of people who have died from terrorist activity has increased ninefold since the year 2000.



Number of people killed in terrorist attacks over the last 15 years

## Where They're From

A majority of the children eulogized in ISIS propaganda were of Syrian or Iraqi nationality



CNN Source: CTC Sentinel



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Even though most current extremist groups are of Islamic origin, it is important to understand that it is not a problem that only concerns Islam. Violent extremism is seen as an epidemic by some that no one is immune to if proper protection isn't granted. Christianity has gone through it with the Crusades, Europe has gone through it with the rise of Fascism and Nazism. If extreme political, ideological or religious beliefs are ingrained in a person, the use of violence to promote these beliefs may occur. As children are more vulnerable to external factors affecting their beliefs, it is vital that extremist ideals are prevented from affecting them. Especially in the case of Islamic terrorism, more world views should be shown to youth. Member States must ensure the possibility of secular schooling and ensure that no extreme interpretations are given in schools. Even if these interpretations are somehow being forced to a child, they must be taught how to critically think. Resilience among youth, in the context defined above, should be created.

The UN Security Council has passed dozens of resolutions in the topic of combating terrorism. However, these were all short-term solutions that ultimately fell short of addressing the root of the problem. United Nations adopted the first version of Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2006 but had to review it many times since. UNESCO aims to take a more root-based approach that will include both short-term and long-term solutions. "Killing an ideology" may not be possible by only using force, therefore the root of the issue must be addressed.

Due to the unavailability of feasible education, in addition to poverty, many children in conflict zones are pressured into joining terrorist groups in order to find shelter, food and power for their families. While many countries aim to stop this from happening, nations in war have mostly failed to do so. Ensuring that education leads these children to a brighter future is absolutely crucial.

Sometimes, the whole nation itself does not need to be in war or poverty, but a group of people may be marginalized or discriminated. Such situation leads to hatred and makes people resort to violence. This is why people have been joining groups in Middle East from European or Eastern Asian countries where they have experienced discrimination and aim to find a sense of belonging. Another example has been occurring in Turkey where Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has been recruiting Kurds who feel marginalized and make them resort to violence in order to solve their societal issues.

Rise of nationalism all over the world in the last decade has led to a halt in the global citizenship movement, which is a real issue. The divide between the so-called Western and Eastern worlds are getting bigger. This causes people to develop a sense of "us versus them" worldview. Not only children but adults, too, must learn to become global citizens, develop empathy skills, become critical thinkers, and say no to all sorts of violent extremism no matter of its direct effect on the individual.

In places with poor governance, a proper dialogue to bring different people together cannot be established. Therefore, they may resort to settle their differences by fighting. In occasions where rule of law is not consistent and human rights are not strictly protected, violent extremism may be seen as allowed and not immoral. Even though it is hard to believe, some cultures do not see extremism as morally wrong and unlawful. Prolonged conflicts, especially in the Middle East, has also led to the legitimization of violence.



Taking these many factors into consideration, we should still be vary of different situations. People throughout the world are living in very different situations and what works in Europe may not necessarily work in Africa.

## **Timeline of Major Events**

- September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2001: The World Trade Center in New York City is attacked by Al-Qaeda, signaling the inception of a violent extremist war against Western ideals.
- September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006: The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was adopted.
- 2015: UNESCO and USA began to promote education to prevent violent extremism.
- October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015: UNESCO decides on UNESCO's Role in Promoting Education as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism
- January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016: Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism is presented to the General Assembly.
- 2017: UNESCO releases "Preventing Violent Extremism Through Education: A Guide for Policy Makers"

## **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

### **UNESCO**

UNESCO is working extremely hard in order to improve education standards all around the world. They are also the branch of UN that deals with education in general. Therefore, a lot of burden rests on their shoulders. They aim to help build a resilience towards violent extremism in schools and understand the roots of this issue. They advocate to solve this issue in a global manner by cooperating with all states and organizations possible. They offer guidance to states on the issue. In conjunction with these tasks, they have released a very important document in 2017 that will be a benchmark for future progress.

While most nations of the world are willing to work in conjunction with UNESCO on the issue, a complete unity must be established.

### **United States of America**

USA has spent approximately 1.78 trillion dollars in their quest of fighting terrorism in the last sixteen years. However, they have come to the realization that security measures are not enough in addressing the issue and have requested help from UNESCO. USA was the nation that spearheaded the campaign of promoting education in order to fight violent extremism in 2015. They also face the issue of gun violence, which may be related to violent extremism and they may need to consider stricter gun laws.

### **European Union**

Terrorism in EU was barely a problem at the beginning of the century. They were only spending 5.7 million euros in forces to combat terrorism in 2002. By 2009, this number had increased to nearly



twenty times at 93.5 million euros. Most EU nations such as Belgium and France have also requested assistance from UNESCO in addressing this issue through education.

## **Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue**

The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism was presented in 2016. This is a comprehensive plan that includes many important recommendations. This could be used as an important guide but hasn't resulted in great outcomes because it hasn't been implemented for a very long time.

Another extremely important guide that should be considered by all delegates is "Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policy Makers" which is linked below. It comprehensively tackles many aspects of the issue and it is important for Member States to consider how these recommendations could be applied and how this document could possibly be amended to make it even more effective.

United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was adopted by consensus in 2006 but failed to address the core of its issue. Only after the release of the aforementioned "Plan" was the strategy reviewed to mention the need for proper education in eradicating violent extremism.

## **Possible Solutions**

There are initial steps that must be absolutely taken to tackle this issue. Firstly, Member States must realize that education is absolutely crucial in eradicating violent extremism and a unanimous unity is needed for UNESCO to properly cooperate with all nations. If cooperation between nations is established, cooperation between people may also be established. UNESCO should be the place for dialogue between nations.

In schools, resilience building should be especially important. Children should be made critical-thinkers from a young age and build resilience towards ideologies that seem morally unacceptable. Schools must ensure that their students are strong independent people that would not be easily manipulated by external influences. All kinds of programs should be implemented to make sure that students are global citizens, in order to productive citizens of their own countries. The importance of schools as a ground for socialization should be realized by means of more open religious dialogue and inclusion of minorities. Schools should aim to be secular while teaching moral values and include as diverse a student body as possible. Lastly, and possibly most crucially, mandatory school attendance policy should be implemented by all means possible. Schools should increase in quantity and quality.

## **Useful Links for Further Research**

- <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002477/247764e.pdf> Preventing Violent Extremism Through Education: A guide for Policy Makers



- [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674) UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism
- <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002348/234879e.pdf> UNESCO Role in Promoting Education

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"Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: a Guide for Policy-Makers; 2017." UNESCO, UNESCO, 2017,

"What Is Violent Extremism?" LivingSafeTogether, Australian Government, [www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/aboutus/Pages/what-is-violent-extremism.aspx](http://www.livingsafetogether.gov.au/aboutus/Pages/what-is-violent-extremism.aspx).