

Soroptimist International Where We Stand: Terrorism

Where Things Stand...

At present the world is gripped with fear from the rise of terrorism across an international stage. No country is immune to its threat. UN Secretary General **António Guterres** observed that terrorism has become an unprecedented threat to international peace, security and development which has grown in intensity and number over the past decade destroying societies and destabilizing entire regions. The UN Secretary General as well as other experts in this area have acknowledged that the threat of terrorism is real, dangerous, and unfortunately here for years to come. (UNSG,SOAS,London, Nov2017)

Regardless of the religious and philosophical ideology of these groups, one common element of their agendas is a subjugation of women and girls. Terrorism has become a war on women, largely from poor and vulnerable communities, where women and their families become marginalized and their human rights eroded by the chaos and violence around them. It is common practice that extremist organizations make the transition to terrorist group by first recruiting young men to control women and girls through all forms of violence including kidnapping and even death. Once these influential young men become a member of the terrorist group, their advances within a country or region are accompanied by further attacking the rights of women and girls to pursue an active public and/or social life as well as having access to such basic human needs as water, food and health care. In addition, the sale of women into slave markets or demand of ransom paid by their families is a common way to raise funds for their criminal activities.

Violent extremists abuse and violate the rights of women and girls through forced marriage and by preventing their access to education. Sexual violence has also become an increasingly common tactic of violent extremist groups to maintain control and spread fear. As the UN Secretary General observed, it is as devastating as any bullet or bomb and will destroy communities and undermine the chances for reconciliation if left unaddressed. (SG, Zagreb, May 2014). As proven by, the Marseille, France and Turku, Finland attacks terrorism is not bound to Middle Eastern or other war-stricken regions. Acts of terrorism are found in all corners of the world, and the trends signal that terrorists are specifically targeting and victimizing women and girls throughout Europe, North America and other regions.

And Where Things Need to Go:

Fundamental Action

There is no excuse for terrorism. Governments must relentlessly fight terrorism and uphold the rule of law to protect women and girl's human rights. We call upon Governments, political officials and religious leaders to speak out firmly and promptly at all times against intolerance and violence against women and girls.

Education is essential for empowering women and girls to achieve gender equality, which in turn is vital for sustainable development (2016 Gender Review UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report).

Experts agree that advantages of empowering women through education benefit society as a whole. Action should be taken by Member States, the private sector and civil society to ensure that all human rights of women and girls are realized including the equal involvement of women and girls in the economic, social, cultural and political development of communities. All Member States should:

- fully implement previous human rights agreements and comply with the requirements of CEDAW.
- develop a consensus on a comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism
- ratify and implement the 19 different international conventions and many regional instruments in this field that make it easier to prosecute terrorists, enhance protection, and cooperate in other key areas.
- document, track and analyze crimes involving terrorism or hate crimes, identify patterns and trends and improve access to justice and services for victims.

Additional Action

Member States are called on to implement a much stronger international cooperation on counter-terrorism. It is time for a new era of intelligence-sharing, and collaboration to save lives and strong cross-border cooperation is needed to make sure that highly-trained terrorists who travel to join conflicts and commit atrocities face prosecution under national laws of that country or their country of origin. States must counter the spread of extremist content and propaganda that is sweeping across borders via websites, email and social media.

Member States must address the many factors that radicalize young people and make terrorism an attractive option for them. Governments could tackle some of the root causes of terrorism: poverty, inequality, youth, unemployment and the lack of public services, such as health and education. Sustainable and inclusive development will be the best way to tackle the poverty, inequality and lack of opportunity and public services that can make terrorism an attractive option for young people.

Member States need to implement provisions of the Security Council regarding imposed sanctions against terrorist groups as well as increasing international efforts to address the sources of terrorists financing such as money laundering and illicit trafficking.

Where Soroptimist International Stands:

We urge Member States, with support from the United Nations and its agencies:

- to continue to promote women's participation, leadership and empowerment, including by providing support to women's groups, so that their voices are heard and amplified across society, and by strengthening their inclusion in the development and implementation of national strategies on preventing violent extremism. It is widely agreed that the increased participation of women in all sectors of society including government, law enforcement and security agencies will enhance and develop the work to combat terrorism.

- to advance the rule of law to protect women and girl's human rights by fully implementing previously agreed and ratified UN resolutions and conventions.
- to promote sustainable and inclusive development as the best way to tackle the poverty, inequality and lack of opportunity and public services that can make terrorism an attractive option for young people.
- recognize the role which mothers within communities can play in combatting terrorism, giving them support to further this action with community leaders.
- to listen to the voices of the victims of terrorism, especially women and girls and consistently call for accountability and results.