



Concept Note

Consultation

Preventing Violent Extremism in Prisons

7-8 November 2017

Amman, Jordan

Background and Rationale

The potential linkage between imprisonment and radicalization to violence has become a source of serious concern in many Member States. Often, perpetrators of terrorist acts have a criminal history, and there are cases of individuals having been recruited or radicalized to violence in the course of imprisonment. A recent report by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence found that 57% of the examined individuals they interviewed had previously been incarcerated for various criminal offences, and at least 27% were radicalized to violence during their imprisonment.¹ Worldwide, the number of prisoners radicalized to join violent extremist groups, or to commit terrorist acts is believed to be increasing. This poses a combined challenge to prison authorities: on the one hand, the “regular” prison population needs to be protected from the influence of violent extremist prisoners ; on the other hand, practical and effective methods of disengagement from violence and violent ideals should be considered for violent extremist prisoners while they are in prison and upon their release.

The Secretary-General’s Plan of Action for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) from December 2015 calls for a comprehensive approach, encompassing “*not only essential based counter-terrorism measures, but also systematic preventive steps to address the underlying conditions that drive individuals to radicalize and join violent extremist groups*”.² The S-G Plan of Action further acknowledges that harsh treatment in detention facilities can play a role in the recruitment of prisoners to violent extremist groups and terrorist organizations and calls for interventions to prevent the spread of violent extremism among prison communities while upholding protection and international human rights standards. Based on the Secretary-General’s Plan of Action, UNDP developed the global framework ‘Preventing Violent Extremism through Inclusive Development and the Promotion of Tolerance and Respect for Diversity.’

Violent extremist attacks and related arrests are increasing, with large numbers of foreign fighters expected to return to their home communities. Thus, the challenge of radicalisation to violence in prisons and the need to engage in preventive and re-integrative work is becoming more pertinent. Nowhere is this more acute than in the Arab States, which is affected by the highest number of incidents globally and with most foreign fighters traveling

1 <http://icsr.info/2016/10/new-icsr-report-criminal-pasts-terrorist-futures-european-jihadists-new-crime-terror-nexus/>

2 <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/en/plan-action-prevent-violent-extremism>



to Syria and Iraq, many eventually returning back to their home countries.³ A number of countries in the region are already addressing the potential prison-radicalisation to violence nexus, and some have sought the support of UNDP, UNODC, PRI and other international organizations. Yet, there remains scope for more focused projects in this area, where UNDP is increasingly being asked by national counterparts to support prevention work in prisons as part of its development work.

To support more effective advise and/or interventions by UNDP, more coordination with other UN and NGO partners working on this issue, including UNODC and PRI, and a stronger knowledge base on the potential of prisons and probation authorities in the prevention of, disengagement from and reintegration after violent extremism is sought.

In preparation for the Consultation on Preventing Violent Extremism in Prisons, UNDP in cooperation with Penal Reform International (PRI) and in collaboration with UNODC, is conducting a stock taking exercise of examples and good practices, including a mapping of UNDP activities on PVE within prisons while also building on global best practices. Moreover, a large research project in Africa about the radicalisation process has recently been completed, interviewing prisoners to deepen the understanding about the ‘tipping point’ during people’s journey to extremism. Over 700 individuals associated with primarily Boko Haram and Al-Shabab in custody, rehabilitation camps or prisons have been interviewed. UNDP Kosovo has also undertaken primary data collection with inmates in prisons which gives an insight into the situation and radicalization process.

PRI has been implementing projects that provide technical support on the management and treatment of violent extremist prisoners to prison departments in Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Throughout its work in these countries and globally, PRI conducted several research papers to understand the phenomena and to develop effective tools; these include risk assessment tools, and classification and reintegration programs that aim at the rehabilitation and reintegration of this category of prisoners. In addition, PRI has provided capacity building for prison staff and has developed teaching curriculums for prison academy on violent extremism. In December 2015, PRI organized an international roundtable on ‘Preventing Radicalisation in Prisons: Developing a Coordinated and Effective Approach’⁴ bringing together 30 participants from 15 countries representing the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Central and South Asia. That consultation provided a number of important recommendations for further action that are important to

Within the United Nations, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) acts as the custodian of the recently revised UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the

3 “Institute for Economics and Peace. 2016. “Global Terrorism Index 2016.” (<http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>)

4 file:///C:/Users/TaghreedJaber/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/DN3OUVS2/PRI-Radicalisation-briefing-paper-V2.pdf



Nelson Mandela Rules), and is implementing prison reform programmes worldwide with a view to foster their practical application. With regards to the specific issue of violent extremist prisoners, UNODC has developed and published a comprehensive Handbook dedicated to the *“Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons”*⁵, as a specialized resource for prison practitioners and policymakers. This handbook – the first of its kind at UN level – has been developed in the course of two international Expert Group meetings. Subsequently, UNODC has started translating the Handbooks key principles and recommendations into technical assistance programmes in various regions, including MENA, Central Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Objectives

Building on the existing knowledge base on the potential of prisons and probation authorities in the prevention of and disengagement from violent extremism, and to take stock of the most effective development interventions to date, UNDP is partnering with Penal Reform International (PRI) to organize a Consultation.

The overall objective is to learn from ongoing practices and models, such as by UNODC and PRI, as well as regional and global experts and to inform UNDPs future approach on PVE in prisons. The meeting will draw upon global guidance and expertise..

By convening international experts and practitioners, the workshop will focus on:

- Developing a better understanding of the process of radicalization to violence in prisons and detention centres, in different contexts;
- Promoting an exchange of knowledge, research and practical experiences on PVE in prisons and detention centres, including global good practices;
- Considering possible roles of key actors engaged in PVE work in prisons and detention centres, with a special focus on the role of UNDP Country Offices, and
- Feeding into recommendations for global policy development and guidance for UNDP and others, in this area.

Participants

This consultation is jointly organized by UNDP and PRI, in collaboration with UNODC. It will bring together global experts, academics, key national practitioners (governmental and NGOs), as well as PRI, UNODC and OHCHR experts and practitioners, together with UNDP Country Offices currently working in this area or with an interest in engaging.

Date and Location

The workshop is proposed to take place 7-8 November in Amman, Jordan.

⁵ https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/Handbook_on_VEPs.pdf; also see UNODC’s Handbook on the Management of High-risk Prisoners at http://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/HB_on_High_Risk_Prisoners_Ebook_appr.pdf.