

## “Foreign Terrorist Fighters – Challenges for South-Eastern Europe” (IRC-05-CF-15)

**Date:** 06-08 October 2015

**Location:** Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Background:** The threat to universal peace and security from terrorist organizations is increasing as more citizens from around the globe join their ranks. Acknowledging the serious threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters [hereinafter FTF] the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted on 24 September 2014, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, its landmark Resolution 2178. The document is the most significant document related to terrorism since 2001.

The document defines FTF as “individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the purpose of the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict.”<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the UNSCR 2178 encourages Member States **to engage in international and (sub- regional co-operation** to prevent FTF’s travel, to co-operate in terrorism-related investigations and prosecution and to assist each other in building the capacity to address the FTF threat.

Other international organizations have adopted declarations and framing documents to implement UNSCR 2178. The OSCE in its Ministerial Council, meeting in Basel on 4-5 December 2014, adopted a Declaration on *The OSCE Role in Countering the Phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in the Context of UN Security Council Resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014)*. The OSCE participating States (pS), including the South-Eastern Europe pS thereby affirmed their intention to take resolute action to counter FTF and reiterated relevant OSCE counter-terrorism related commitments.

Unprecedented numbers of citizens and residents of the countries around the world, including South East Europeans, have been recruited to fight in the battlefields in Syria in Iraq. Moreover, it is believed that many individuals, especially the youth, are vulnerable to violent radicalization and recruitment as FTF. According to the United Nations Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team some 15,000 from the 80 countries went to fight with various groups in Syria and Iraq, including ISIL,<sup>2</sup> while the London based think tank *International Centre for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence* (ISRC) says that the number of FTF in Syria and Iraq exceeds 20,000.<sup>3</sup>

The Internet and the social network is a principle tool for recruitment as it is difficult to regulate these and the process of prevention by the authorities is, therefore, being complicated. There are several preparatory phases that should be passed in order to get to the battlefield. The threat posed by FTF contains the following three phases: radicalization and recruitment, the departure to the battlefield and possible return to their

<sup>1</sup> UNSCR 2178: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2178\(2014\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2178(2014))

<sup>2</sup> Sixteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, pursuant to resolution 2161 (2014). Doc. S/2014/770

<sup>3</sup> ICSR, “Foreign fighter total in Syria/Iraq now exceeds 20,000; surpasses Afghanistan conflict in the 1980s”. <http://icsr.info/2015/01/foreign-fighter-total-syriairaq-now-exceeds-20000-surpasses-afghanistan-conflict-1980s/>

countries. The returnees pose a risk of a future spread of extremism, involvement in attacks and other terrorism related crimes in their home countries as well.

There are no official consolidated statistics on the number of FTF from South-Eastern Europe, but, however, the ICSR estimates that around 600 South-Eastern nationals have joined the conflicts in Iraq and Syria.<sup>4</sup> It seems urgent then that countries should undertake counter-terrorism measures which comply with all of their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law, and international humanitarian law.

Many countries do not as yet possess appropriate legislation in line with the international standards to implement UNSCR 2178, to criminalize and prosecute the travel or intention to depart to other countries than theirs to receive or provide terrorist training, preparation or planning of terrorist acts, and also financing the FTF's travel and other types of assistance for operation of the FTF, especially recruitment.

The threat posed by FTF is impossible to handle individually and requires closer co-operation both on the domestic, regional and international levels as emphasized by the UNSCR 2178. The broader co-operation between states, civil society, international and regional organizations should be strengthened and well-coordinated to respond to the existing challenges and risks.

Therefore, RACVIAC - Center for Security Cooperation, the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina have agreed to convene a regional conference under the title: **“Foreign Terrorist Fighters – Challenges for South-Eastern Europe”**.

The expert level workshop aims to provide a platform for a first regional exchange of views and experiences with regard to the threat of FTF in South-Eastern Europe and implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), in compliance with the rule of law and with all obligations under international law, including international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

**Purpose and Objectives:**

The purpose of this event is to provide a platform for national authorities of the South-Eastern European countries, the civil society, academic circles and international organizations working in different counter-terrorism related areas. The conference will be a forum for discussing the FTF phenomenon in the region, starting from radicalization up to the recruitment, departure and return. The obstacles and solutions in mitigation of the problem with FTF, preparedness and inter-institutional and cross-border cooperation and coordination of counter-terrorism responses in the region, in light of domestic and international regulations and best practices, will be reviewed as well.

The main objectives of the conference are to get a general view of the international framework and initiatives and measures taken on both the international and domestic levels, to exchange the best practices, lessons learned and to discuss effective cooperation in:

- preventing the radicalization to terrorism and recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters;
- preventing foreign terrorist fighters from crossing State borders;
- disrupting and preventing financial support to foreign terrorist fighters;
- developing and implementing the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for returning foreign terrorist fighters.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid

**Participants:** The participants should represent each of the following countries: AL, BA, HR, ME, MK, RO, RS, and TR.  
In addition to the above-listed, attendees from all other associate members, observers and participants are invited to attend the activity.

Suggested participants are from the following entities:

- State ministries and directorates/agencies dealing with counter terrorism;
- Relevant faculties and research institutes;
- International organizations and embassies located in BA;
- High representatives of religious communities;
- Civil society – nongovernmental organizations.

Attendants should be at the appropriate decision making and highest operational and strategic level.

**Methodology:** The event is designed as an expert forum and will be conducted in the form of conference panels (plenary sessions). The language of the conference is English.  
Simultaneous translation will be provided for local languages.

**Points of contact:**

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