



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM
UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)

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**Webinar on ‘Resilience to violent extremism through Strategic Communications’,
organised by the United Nations Center of Counter Terrorism (UNCCT) and the King
Faisal Center for Research & Islamic Studies (KFCRIS)**

7 December 2021

Excellencies,
Distinguished experts,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my great honour to join you today.

Firstly, I would like to thank His Royal Highness Prince Turki AlFaisal for the pleasure of his friendship over many years. We are delighted to have you join this webinar, and benefit from the wisdom of one of the international community’s most seasoned and respected diplomats.

I wish to thank the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic studies for co-hosting today’s event with the UN Centre for Counter- Terrorism. I warmly recall my most recent visit to the Center during my latest mission to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and how impressive the team, programmes and facilities were at the King Faisal Center under the leadership of His Royal Highness Prince Turki AlFaisal.

I commend you for your efforts to promote peace and security in the Middle East and Africa. We have much to learn from your excellent work.

Today’s webinar takes place at a critical time, especially given the sense of urgency arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on increasing terrorist propaganda.

While Al-Qaeda’s ability to execute large-scale terrorist operations has diminished, the organisation has adopted a localised affiliate model over the past decade and has expanding its influence globally. Da’esh has further expanded in Africa through the group’s regional affiliates, while the Da’esh core has remained focused on regrouping in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

The ascendancy of the Taliban in Afghanistan and withdrawal of American troops means the world continues to watch how events there will impact terrorism trends and developments globally.

Racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism is becoming a transnational threat, and we continue to see lone actors undertake terrorism, highlighting a growing trend among violent extremist movements across the spectrum for adapting a mixture of ideological and behavioural inspirations. This often results in attacks that are increasingly driven by convoluted ideology.

With people spending more time online during the pandemic, violent extremist entities have used social media and online gaming platforms as a means of spreading hate and disinformation, as well as to recruit young people and radicalizing them.

And with the pandemic magnifying existing and emerging vulnerabilities and exacerbating risks to social cohesion, our efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism are more important than ever.

His Royal Highness and distinguished delegates,

Even while the COVID-19 crisis is still ongoing, it is crucial to discuss our responses to the evolving threat of terrorism.

The UN Counter Terrorism Center focuses on building global capacities to address these threats. This year, the UN Counter Terrorism Center launched a Global Programme to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism, helping governments, regional organisations, and civil society to build resilience and technical capacity to reduce the risk of terrorism and violent extremism.

Our team uses evidence-based knowledge to deliver PCVE programmes in strategic communications, policy assistance, peer-to-peer youth empowerment, mental health, as well as what we call 'new frontier' prevention, which explores the intersection of violent extremism with climate security and video games.

In today's webinar, the PCVE team will share with you the impact of our joint project with the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations called 'EDIN', which was fully funded by Saudi Arabia. I should also note that the project was devised by a very talented Saudi Junior Professional Officer. EDIN focuses on empowering young religious leaders and young media makers to develop more effective counter and alternative narratives. We will learn from one of the project's graduates about the impact EDIN had on building her own digital resilience to

terrorist narratives, and the impact the training has had on her own work in interreligious dialogue.

To do our work, our programme relies on cutting-edge research. And therefore, today's webinar is so important to us.

The King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies is renowned for the quality and impressive breadth of its research in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, offering us a necessary and complementary authentic voice from the region, not to mention an evidence-informed perspective that can help strengthen our work in the field of preventing and countering violent extremism.

Today's webinar also provides a platform for people of different backgrounds and expertise to discuss their findings, fostering a learning culture that brings new ideas and approaches to the fore.

This is the first step in what I know will be an important, mutually beneficial relationship between United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism and the King Faisal Center. A relationship that will go beyond engagement on prevention and will have relevance and impact across the spectrum of counter-terrorism issues. We are now developing a Memorandum of Understanding between our two organisations to develop a strategic partnership formally.

I want to again express my deepest gratitude to His Royal Highness Prince Turki and his distinguished colleagues personal support for our work here today.

I look forward to the outcome of our engagement together.

Thank you.