**Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism**

**Report on the impact of counterterrorism on peace-making, peacebuilding, sustaining peace, conflict prevention and resolution**

**Ireland’s Response**

**August 2022**

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1. Ireland believes that effective counter-terrorism responses demand whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. Such approaches should be grounded in respect for human rights and have an understanding for local contexts through engagement with civil society and affected communities. Civil society plays a critical role in building resilience within local communities, mitigating the influence of terrorist and violent extremist groups and promoting transparency and accountability in counterterrorism initiatives. This becomes all the more important when the world bears witness to the misuse of counterterrorism measures to target and criminalise civil society and human rights defenders for articulating views contrary to the official position of the State or for speaking out about human rights violations. Preventing civil society from carrying out their crucial work will only exacerbate the conditions that make communities vulnerable to recruitment by terrorists and non-state armed groups.
2. Current approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism are framed by counterterrorism architecture which has traditionally focused on criminal justice responses to terrorist and violent extremist activities. While Ireland acknowledges the importance of a criminal justice approach to terrorism, there is a clear need to strengthen human rights compliance in criminal justice responses globally. We understand that through our own national experience that effective counterterrorism strategy is one that respects human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law; however we acknowledge that the protection of human rights in this context of countering terrorism continues to be a challenging endeavour. Ireland fully recognises the need to promote policy approaches that create the conditions to prevent rather than perpetuate violent extremist ideologies and activities in certain contexts.
3. Terrorism constitutes a significant contributing factor to the creation of humanitarian crises and complex humanitarian emergencies. Terrorist activity can impede humanitarian action by undermining humanitarian activity and endangering humanitarian actors. Ireland is all too aware of attacks, including unlawful killings, perpetrated against humanitarian workers and medical personnel. Measures to counter terrorism including sanctions are crucial to deter and address terrorist threats. Ireland implements UN and EU sanctions or restrictive measures which may consist of asset freezes, trade restrictions or travel bans. EU restrictive measures are fully compliant with international law and these measures are proportionate to the objectives they seek to achieve. The targeted nature of EU sanctions regimes are intended to lessen to the maximum extent possible any adverse humanitarian effects or unforeseen consequences for non-targeted persons in particular the civilian population. Ireland’s firm view is that we must ensure that counterterrorism measures do not impede access to, and the delivery of, principled humanitarian assistance and we continue to push for enhanced humanitarian safeguards within counterterrorism resolutions and sanctions regimes.
4. Nil response
5. UN Security Council resolution 2535 highlighted the “importance of a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace, particularly through the prevention of conflict and addressing its root causes at all stages of conflict …”. Resolution 2535 also recognises the cross-cutting nature of the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda and the key role of youth in the work on peacebuilding, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. However, it also perpetuated the problematic view that youth are easy targets for radicalisation and are generally seen as either perpetrators or victims of terrorism and violent extremism. The focus, therefore, should be on investing in the resilience of youth and on promoting their full, equal and meaningful participation in building and sustaining peace. Inclusive processes are required to build stronger and more sustainable peace. Ireland has long been and continues to be an advocate for the inclusion of civil society and a range of actors who have been traditionally excluded from peace processes, in particular women, young people minorities. Youth play a critical role in the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as in peacebuilding. Ireland knows from our own lived experience that peacebuilding is an intergenerational process and must be inclusive of young people which is why we strongly support the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda.

In the Northern Ireland context, the Irish Government provides support for the YPS agenda through its Reconciliation Fund, operated by the Department of Foreign Affairs. The Reconciliation Fund works to support peace and reconciliation within the framework of the Good Friday Agreement which was signed in 1998 and brought an end to the period of violent conflict in Northern Ireland known as the “Troubles”. The Reconciliation Fund supports the implementation of that Agreement and subsequent agreements by facilitating initiatives that seek to address and heal the legacy of division and violence and build a cohesive society founded upon respect for all identities and traditions. Even though young people did not experience the violence of the Troubles directly, they may nevertheless have inherited particular narratives and perspectives within their communities which need to be explored. As recently highlighted in [Voices from the Margins: Young men and post-conflict masculinities in Northern Ireland](https://www.interpeace.org/outside-the-box-amplifying-youth-voices-and-views-on-yps-policy-and-practice/voices-from-the-margins-young-men-and-post-conflict-masculinities-in-northern-ireland/) – a YPS policy brief commissioned by Interpeace with support from the Department of Foreign Affairs’ Stability Fund – youth in Northern Ireland continue to be affected in specific ways by persisting political, cultural, and social divisions and are targeted for recruitment by paramilitary groups that remain active in NI communities. It is therefore imperative to address the role of social exclusion in driving violent masculinities and invest in building the capacity of young people to become involved in peacebuilding. On this question we would also draw the Special Rapporteur’s attention to Interpeace policy brief [The Counterstrike Generation](https://www.interpeace.org/outside-the-box-amplifying-youth-voices-and-views-on-yps-policy-and-practice/the-counterstrike-generation/), also funded by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, which explores the impact of securitisation of the YPS agenda.

1. Counterterrorism measures must be conducted in compliance with international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law. However, oftentimes, counterterrorism measures are misused to silence human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, political opponents, and civil society. Ireland recognises the need to promote policy approaches that create the conditions to prevent, rather than perpetuate violent extremist ideologies and activities. Such approaches should be firmly grounded in respect for human rights, have an understanding of local contexts through engagement with civil society and affected communities, and be gender responsive. Ireland believes that strengthening gender-responsive counterterrorism policies and promoting women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in counterterrorism processes and mechanisms is essential for sustainable progress and reform. At the same time, comprehensive counterterrorism policy should also include a mainstreamed gender-responsive approach that also considers the impacts of terrorism and counterterrorism on men, boys, and LGBTQI+ persons, as well as the impacts of gender inequalities and stereotypes. Ireland welcomes the announcement that the Counterterrorism Committee will hold a briefing on integrating gender into counterterrorism responses at the end of 2022. This represents an opportunity for CT actors to further explore ways to increase the participation of women and women’s organisations in efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism, as well as share lessons and good practices on minimising the impact of CT strategies on women and girls.