Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

2023 Annual Report on the Implementation of the 1994 Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism

Legal and Political Framework

1.	The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as a regional arrangement[1] under Chapter VIII of the United Nations (UN) Charter, has a strong mandate to contribute to the global fight against terrorism. Relevant UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) and the Universal Anti-Terrorism Instruments (UATI), constitute a solid and comprehensive legal basis for combating terrorism on a global scale and provide a clear roadmap for the steps that need to be taken to do so. The role of the OSCE is to assist its participating States and Partners for Co-operation, at their request and in close co-ordination with the UN and other relevant international organizations, in fulfilling their international obligations and OSCE commitments in the field of combating terrorism. The *OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism*, adopted in 2012, reiterates the OSCE's comprehensive approach and identifies strategic focus areas for the Organization's counter-terrorism efforts. It also confirms the role of the Action against Terrorism Unit of the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department (TNTD/ATU) as the focal point, information resource and implementation partner for OSCE counter-terrorism activities.

2.	While the annual Chairpersonship-in-Office Counter-Terrorism Conference did not take place in 2023, TNTD continued contributing to policy-level discussions as exhibited under the thematic paragraphs below, *e.g.* during the 2023 UN Counter-Terrorism Week in New York. Moreover, the OSCE and UNOCT signed a Memorandum of Understanding (2023-2027) and a Biennial Action Plan (2024-2025) on 18 September 2023. These documents provide a framework for the co-operation between the UN and the OSCE, promoting the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and enhancing the co-ordination of related technical assistance to UN Member States and OSCE participating States.

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[1] The Organization comprises 57 participating States that span the globe, encompassing three continents - North America, Europe and Asia - and more than a billion people.

3.   TNTD also contributed to the assessment visit of the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee to Spain in April 2023. During this assessment, TNTD contributed its expertise on a number of topics, including on preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (P/CVERLT), with a particular focus on rehabilitation and reintegration and a gender-sensitive victim-centred approach, as well as on addressing emerging technologies and radicalization to violence in the online space. Participating in these assessment visits also enabled TNTD to follow up with Spain's Guardia Civil on identifying synergies and good practices that may benefit other OSCE participating States.

Programmatic Activities

4.   TNTD assists participating States in addressing the multifaceted and evolving terrorist threat in line with the areas identified in the *OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism* and all relevant Ministerial Council and Permanent Council Decisions and Declarations.

One of the strategic focus areas of the OSCE is **promoting the international legal framework against terrorism** among participating States and Partners for Co-operation and facilitating co-operation in related criminal matters. In co-operation with the Organization's field operations and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), TNTD promoted and supported the adaptation of national legislation in accordance with international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law, as well as Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations on countering the financing of terrorism specifically.

In June 2023, TNTD followed up on its prior efforts regarding the issue of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and affiliated women and children, co-organizing a policy event on "Resolving the Detainee Dilemma" jointly with the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at King's College London (ICSR) and the Middle East Institute (MEI). This

event addressed challenges presented by over 10,000 male ISIS detainees and 56,000 associated women and children held in camps in northeast Syria[2]. The event aimed at:

- establishing an overview of the situation of ISIS detainees and FTFs held in northeast Syria, discuss the risks associated with a decision to repatriate or not, and explore ways to improve conditions on the ground;
- discussing challenges related to the repatriation, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of former FTFs and their family members; and
- extending the current discussion focusing on repatriating women and children to men and older boys held in detention camps or rehabilitation and reintegration facilities.

The outcomes of this and earlier regional and OSCE-wide policy dialogues on FTFs, such as a high-level conference co-organized in 2020 with UNOCT and Switzerland[3], were included in a new extrabudgetary project aimed at supporting participating States and Partners for Co-operation in the prosecution and rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals that returned or were repatriated from the conflict zones in the Middle East. Moreover, in co-operation with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), TNTD provided training and facilitated information-sharing on the use of tools for co-operation in criminal matters, relevant to countering terrorism in general, and handling of former FTFs in the MENA region in particular. OSCE field operations in South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia have also addressed FTF-related aspects through their respective lines of effort.

TNTD also co-organized with the Council of Europe (CoE) and UNCTED a side event during the 2023 UN Counter-Terrorism Week on "Good practices for managing violent extremist prisoners: preventing radicalisation to violence while promoting disengagement and rehabilitation". The OSCE contributed input on age- and gender-sensitive approaches to the rehabilitation and reintegration of former violent extremists and those associated with violent extremism.

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[2] The population of Al-Hol and Al-Roj, the two largest camps, consists to 60% of children, mostly under the age of twelve.
[3] Conference Report: https://www.osce.org/secretariat/483539.

5.   In the closely related field of **P/CVERLT**, TNTD and the OSCE Secretariat's Programme for Gender Issues organized the first in-person meeting for two networks for women P/CVERLT professionals across various sectors in South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia. This facilitated trust-building, the sharing of experience and good practices, and generated new ideas. Building on the *Policy Brief on the Linkages between Violent Misogyny and VERLT*[4] that was published in 2022. TNTD also co-organized a side event on "Bridging the gap: connecting research, policy and practice on masculinities to more effectively prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism", together with Canada, Mexico, UNCTED and UNOCT during the 2023 UN Counter-Terrorism Week in New York.

Violent extremist and terrorist groups exploit the internet in order to spread violent content, gain support and recruit members. The COVID-19 pandemic saw a proliferation of hostile sexist and xenophobic conspiracy theories, highlighting the significant need to bolster critical thinking and analysis, as well as media and information literacy skills. Therefore, in May 2023, TNTD launched a five-year initiative called "Project INFORMED: Information and Media Literacy in Preventing Violent Extremism: Human Rights and Gender-Sensitive Approaches to Addressing the Digital Information Disorder". The project highlights the importance that the OSCE places on addressing radicalization to violence in the online space, as well as the use of emerging technologies by violent extremist groups and terrorists. It includes support to multi-stakeholder audiences in building critical thinking skills and identifying violent extremist and polarizing content, as well as in finding locally relevant and safe avenues for addressing these in the national context. This project builds on long-standing efforts to support civil society in P/CVERLT, including under the Leaders against Intolerance and Violent Extremism (LIVE) project, which concluded in 2022. Thus, Project INFORMED has a significant component focusing on youth engagement and empowerment, and also addresses gender-specific challenges related to violent extremism and the digital information disorder. The project responds to emerging trends in the technological development and the use of social network tools, as well as the rapid proliferation of generative artificial intelligence

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[4] OSCE Policy Brief – Linkages between Violent Misogyny and Violent Extremism | OSCE.

seen throughout 2023, addressing these new challenges in a way that is respectful of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression. In addition to raising awareness of the need for critical thinking and analysis as well as meaningful engagement in the digital space, the project also seeks to support participating States in identifying opportunities for collaborating with non-government stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, to create resilience to VERLT online.

Finally, TNTD spoke on "Good International and Regional Practices on P/CVE" during the Fourth Counter-Terrorism Coordination Meeting of Parliamentary Assemblies, co-organized by the UNOCT, the Shura Council of Qatar and the OSCE, in Vienna on 4 and 5 October 2023.

6.   Linked to these efforts under P/CVERLT, a strong importance is attached to **countering the use of the internet for terrorist purposes**, considering the abuse of the internet for recruitment and training, collection and transfer of funds, the planning and execution of terrorist acts or the incitement to such violence. OSCE participating States have committed themselves to exchange information about this threat as well as to enhance international co-operation and public-private partnerships. This includes the development of practical measures to counter the use of the internet for terrorist purposes for inciting VERLT or recruiting FTFs. To assist policymakers, law enforcement and governmental officials, as well as academia and NGO practitioners, to effectively respond to online violent extremism and terrorism and to strengthen the efficiency of their efforts, TNTD facilitated the delivery of three related national tabletop exercises in Kazakhstan, Serbia and Turkmenistan.

Moreover, to enhance national capacities across the OSCE area in requesting electronic evidence from service providers that are based in foreign jurisdictions when investigating online criminality matters, including terrorism-related cases in line with human rights parameters, TNTD developed and launched in 2023 a new extrabudgetary project titled "E-VIDENCE – Requesting Electronic Evidence across Borders". It builds on previous activities pursued jointly by TNTD/ATU and the Department's Strategic Police Matters Unit (TNTD/SPMU) and aims at supporting participating States and Partners for Co-operation in addressing the complex challenges of cross-border electronic evidence

requests, for which a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is needed. The project integrates human rights parameters throughout each of its stages, ensuring that the capacities developed are applied in a way that promotes the protection of and respect for human rights. The project will focus on augmenting the technical capacities of national law enforcement agencies and judiciaries regarding cross-border electronic evidence requests, including through train-the-trainer courses utilizing materials developed jointly with UNODC and INTERPOL.

7. As exhibited by the efforts above, OSCE participating States are also committed to drawing on the support of the private sector, the media and civil society as a whole. The OSCE involves these stakeholders as much as possible in its counter-terrorism activities and promotes dialogue and co-operation in addressing relevant issues, in particular through **public-private partnerships** (PPPs), which are mainstreamed in TNTD programmes. Apart from the work on countering the use of the internet for terrorist purposes, this also includes efforts on countering the financing of terrorism, as well as on vulnerable targets protection.

8. In the area of **countering the financing of terrorism** (CFT), TNTD/ATU, with the support of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, the OSCE Programme Office in Astana, and the OSCE Mission to Skopje, organized eight specialized courses for beneficiary entities on topics related to conducting financial analysis and investigations, using targeted financial sanctions pertaining to existing CFT sanction regimes and on preventing the abuse of non-profit organizations for the financing of terrorism. The courses, some of which were organized in partnership with the UNODC, were implemented as part of a progressively advanced training programme, which aims at enhancing capacities of competent agencies to conduct financial investigations in counter-terrorism efforts and at strengthening local CFT frameworks. These efforts have led to sustainable results across the OSCE area, including improved inter-agency co-operation, along with increased knowledge and skills of participants on intelligence handling, network analysis and analytical methods related to the financing of terrorism, allocation of more resources to CFT within national financial intelligence units and inclusion of CFT material in the training programmes of involved agencies.

Furthermore, TNTD also contributed to working group and plenary meetings of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), based on its experience with the implementation of the training modules mentioned above.

9. Yet another part of the OSCE's strong commitment to PPPs in a counter-terrorism context derives from its mandate to enhance the **security of critical infrastructure and soft targets** (collectively termed "vulnerable targets") in OSCE participating States, initially expressed in OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Public-Private Partnerships in Countering Terrorism (MC.DEC/5/07). The OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism further built the mandate of critical infrastructure protection, as did UNSCR 2341 (2017) on Protection of Critical Infrastructure against Terrorist Acts and UNSCR 2396 (2017) on Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters, as well as the 2015 UN Security Council Madrid Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and their 2018 Addendum. On this topic, TNTD manages a dedicated portfolio of activities that seek to strengthen national approaches across the OSCE area in the protection of vulnerable targets from terrorist threats and other hazards through the provision of specialized guidance, technical assistance and opportunities for regional co-operation.

Specifically, TNTD developed a multi-year initiative called "Project PROTECT on the Protection of Vulnerable Targets from Terrorist Attacks". This project was designed in response to growing threats to critical infrastructure and public places across the OSCE area, including houses of worship, transport networks and touristic sites. In December 2023, Project PROTECT was launched in Uzbekistan through a national awareness-raising workshop, with additional activities planned in the coming years, and included the participation of UNOCT as a close partner of TNTD.

Moreover, following TNTD's participation in UNOCT's vulnerable targets protection-related programming in Tajikistan in 2022, UNOCT, TNTD and the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe co-organized the launch event for the UN Roadmap on Countering Terrorist Threats against Vulnerable Targets for Tajikistan from 4 to 6 July 2023. In support of this Roadmap, the OSCE facilitated a study tour for officials from Tajikistan to France to learn about national and local approaches to the protection of soft targets

from 20 to 22 November 2023. Such efforts show alignment and close co-operation between UN and OSCE counterparts in the field of vulnerable targets protection.

10.	Throughout 2023, the OSCE Secretariat's TNTD/Border Security Management Unit (BSMU) launched various initiatives to **strengthen border security and management in the context of counter-terrorism**. This included hosting the 2023 Forum of the OSCE Secretary General and Central Asia Border Commanders, which aimed to address cross-border challenges in the region and provide a platform for strategic dialogue and to further strengthen regional co-operation. Efforts were also made to support Moldova in addressing security challenges, particularly in enhancing airport security.

Furthermore, in co-operation with Frontex, INTERPOL and UNOCT, the "OSCE-led Mobile Training Team (MTT) on identifying the cross-border movement of FTFs and other cross-border crimes in the OSCE area" was expanded, and a modular training programme developed, comprising five courses covering travel security, behavioural analysis, interview techniques, crisis management, the prevention of small arms and light weapons smuggling, and countering trafficking in human beings. The courses were successfully piloted in Albania and Uzbekistan, and the training catalogue was translated into Arabic, Montenegrin, Russian and Ukrainian. Subsequently, a 2024 training plan was developed, according to which MTT will be deployed to OSCE participating States upon their request. Additionally, a national MTT was established in Uzbekistan, where training courses addressing most of the above-mentioned modules were conducted, and specialized equipment was provided to customs and border officers in accordance with the roadmap signed with the Government of Uzbekistan. Apart from the MTT's above-mentioned co-operation partners, UNHCR, UNODC and the United Kingdom Police also contributed to the OSCE-led efforts in Uzbekistan.

To combat the illegal trafficking in cultural property and its linkages to organized crime and terrorism financing, BSMU established the OSCE-led Heritage Crime Task Force, comprised of experts from the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Co-operation, INTERPOL, UNODC, UNOCT and national law enforcement agencies. This task force offers training to border and law enforcement officers to suppress heritage crime and

supports participating States with improving their capacities to conduct investigations and dismantle trafficking and illicit financing networks across the OSCE area, and in neighbouring regions including the Middle East and North Africa.

BSMU also organized basic and advanced training courses on the identification of forged documents for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine. Further, the annual meeting of the Eastern European Informal Working Group (EE IWG) was organized jointly with UNOCT back-to-back with the 7th Passenger Data Exchange Seminar, the latter being based on OSCE Ministerial Decision on Enhancing the Use of Advance Passenger Information (API) (MC.DEC/6/16) and UNSCR 2396 (2017) on Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Returning FTFs. These 2023 events gathered members of the EE IWG, representatives of border agencies, state security agencies and customs services from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Mongolia, North Macedonia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine as well as Israel, and provided a forum for discussions on API systems development, and further exchanges on good practices, lessons learned and methodologies in data collection. The OSCE also signed an Addendum to the 2021 Memorandum of Agreement with UNOCT, to continue supporting the EE IWG until December 2024. Moreover, TNTD, jointly with the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe organized a national round table on the implementation of the Roadmap for API in Dushanbe, and assisted with the establishment and donation of equipment for the Passenger Information Unit in Skopje.

BSMU also continued to support the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda by strengthening the capacities of the members of the OSCE's Gender Equality Platform in Border Security and Management (Platform). The Platform consists of border and custom representatives of 23 OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation. These efforts included organizing webinars and training courses for the members of the Platform to discuss the integration of a gender perspective into their daily operations and policy planning, preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the work place, as well raising awareness on the importance of integrating human rights principles and gender- and age- sensitive approach in border controls and similar.

11.   The OSCE ODIHR is active in supporting the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by **promoting the protection of human rights while countering terrorism**. In particular, ODIHR provides advice and analysis on key human rights issues in the counter-terrorism context and promotes dialogue between state and non-state actors to strengthen human rights-compliant responses to terrorism.

In this context, ODIHR held a regional workshop in September 2023 for South-Eastern Europe participating States to promote dialogue and raise awareness among key stakeholders about the importance of independent detention monitoring for enhancing the protection of human rights while preventing and countering VERLT in prisons.[5] As a follow-up to a similar regional workshop for Central Asia in 2022, ODIHR increased the knowledge and skills of detention monitors from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan through its first tailored training workshop on the protection of human rights while preventing and countering VERLT in prisons in Bishkek in November 2023.[6] These activities were based on the *Guide for Detention Monitors* published jointly by ODIHR and Penal Reform International in 2021.[7]

ODIHR also supports OSCE participating States in strengthening law enforcement capacities to protect human rights while preventing and countering terrorism. In 2023, ODIHR organized training courses for law enforcement authorities in Uzbekistan in co-operation with the OSCE field operation.[8] The training courses in Uzbekistan were held for local branches of law enforcement agencies in two regions of the country and were conducted together with national co-trainers who had previously completed an ODIHR train-the-trainer course.

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[5] See: https://www.osce.org/odihr/547939.
[6] See: https://www.osce.org/odihr/556932.
[7] The Guidance tool is now available in five languages at: https://www.osce.org/odihr/492934.
[8] See: https://www.osce.org/odihr/541509.

Moreover, ODIHR raised awareness in international and OSCE forums of the human rights risks in border security-related counter-terrorism measures, on the basis of the *ODIHR Policy Brief on Border Management and Human Rights*.[9]

Finally, ODIHR also assists OSCE participating States, upon their request, by reviewing draft and existing counter-terrorism legislation to assess their compliance with international human rights standards and OSCE human dimension commitments.[10] In 2023, ODIHR published a Note on the European Commission's proposed revised definition of terrorist offence in the context of the ongoing discussions in the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT) on a revision of the existing definition in Article 1 of the CoE Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism.[11]

12.   The **Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) of the OSCE Secretariat** is the focal point for co-ordinating the Organization's work to combat money laundering. OCEEA and TNTD work within their respective mandates to counter the financing of terrorism. In 2023, OCEEA supported participating States in mitigating money laundering and other financial crimes risks of virtual assets and cryptocurrencies. OCEEA, together with TNTD, also works on topics such as youth crime prevention and asset recovery. Moreover, OCEEA promotes transparency and accountability through open data. The OSCE's work with participating States is guided by the 2003 OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension, the 2012 OSCE Ministerial Council Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance and Combating Corruption, Money-Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism (MC.DOC/2/12), the OSCE Ministerial Council Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity (MC.DOC/4/16) the MCD on Preventing and Combatting Corruption through Digitalization and Increased Transparency (2020) and the Joint Statement on Combating Corruption in South-Eastern Europe through Asset Recovery and the Use of Digitalization, signed by the foreign

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[9] See: https://www.osce.org/odihr/499777.

[10] For information about how to request legislative assistance from ODIHR see: https://www.osce.org/odihr/407447. All ODIHR opinions and comments on counter-terrorism legislation are available at: https://legislationline.org/legal-reviews.

[11] See: https://legislationline.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/2023-09-28%20FINAL%20ODIHR%20Note%20on%20Pan-European%20definition%20of%20terrorism.pdf.

ministers of five South-Eastern Europe participating States in Skopje in 2023. Much of the OSCE's work with regard to countering the financing of terrorism is in support of the FATF recommendations. In the aforementioned MC.DOC/2/12, OSCE participating States expressed their full support for the FATF recommendations and in February 2013 the OSCE became an observer to the FATF.