



# Rehabilitating and Reintegrating Violent Extremist Offenders and Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters

Lessons From Civil Society Actors

## BACKGROUND

As the number of individuals detained for or sentenced on violent extremism and terrorism offenses increases, governments face the challenge of managing the specific population of violent extremist offenders (VEOs) inside and outside the prison system and developing programs to facilitate their eventual reentry into society. The potential risks posed by these VEOs and returning foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) are as varied as their age groups, genders, motivations, and actual crimes committed. What many have in common, however, is the return to fractured relationships with their home state and communities that must be repaired. A comprehensive response to VEOs and returning FTFs must therefore address their rehabilitation and reintegration into society, while also addressing the needs of their victims.

Governments have the primary responsibility for developing and managing rehabilitation and reintegration programs, but local communities can play an important, collaborative role in helping design and deliver programming where appropriate. As states are confronted with the challenges of VEOs and returning

FTFs, the international community has increasingly recognized the importance of engaging with and involving the communities that are absorbing returnees, relocators, and ex-offenders, as well as tending to those affected by the violence. The UN Security Council, through Resolution 2396, calls on member states to develop and implement comprehensive and tailored rehabilitation and reintegration strategies and recognizes the role that civil society organizations can play in these efforts. Echoing Resolution 2178, Resolution 2396 also calls for member states to work with local communities, mental health and education practitioners, and relevant civil society organizations to address the challenges posed by offenders, returnees, and relocators.

This international recognition is critical as the scourge of violent extremism is felt most acutely at the local level, where civil society organizations often have the best knowledge of, access to, and engagement with the community to confront the challenges of recruitment and radicalization, as well as the aftermath of violence and conflict. Yet, governments and civil society organizations face a number of challenges in their

efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate perpetrators and address the needs of victims. For instance, many governments lack a conceptual or legal framework on rehabilitation and reintegration for VEOs and FTFs that delineates procedures, protections, and responsibilities, much less the role of civil society in the process. Additionally, many civil society organizations do not have relationships with government officials that would facilitate partnerships or information sharing to the benefit of rehabilitation and reintegration programming, including access to prisons or detention centers. Furthermore, governments and civil society have a dearth of personnel with the substantive knowledge or training to provide certain aspects of rehabilitation and reintegration, such as legal aid or psychosocial counseling, on the large scale necessary.

### ABOUT THIS PROJECT

To this end, the Global Center on Cooperative Security, with support from the government of Australia, has undertaken a project to further explore the role of civil society organizations in efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate those associated with and affected by violent extremism, particularly in Southeast

Asia, the Greater Horn of Africa, and the Sahel. The Global Center will convene an expert-level workshop in New York in spring 2018 for key stakeholders, including UN representatives, member state officials, civil society representatives, practitioners, and experts to discuss (1) the elements needed for a comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration strategy, (2) how civil society organizations can best contribute to rehabilitation and reintegration efforts, and (3) challenges and opportunities for civil society in this regard and how national governments and the international community can most effectively engage and support them. The proceedings of the workshop and other related activities will inform the development of a policy brief to be released in early summer 2018, in advance of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review. The brief will raise awareness about the various roles civil society organizations can play in rehabilitation and reintegration programs and how governments and international organizations can support and integrate civil society efforts and perspectives into broader preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) strategies, policies, and programs.

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#### About the Global Center on Cooperative Security

The Global Center works with governments, international organizations, and civil society to develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable responses to complex international security challenges through collaborative policy research, context-sensitive programming, and capacity development. The Global Center's work focuses on enhancing community resilience to violent extremism and on supporting national and nongovernmental institutions in responding to multidimensional security challenges. In collaboration with a global network of expert practitioners and partner organizations, the Global Center fosters stronger multilateral partnerships and convenes key stakeholders to support integrated and inclusive security policies across national, regional, and global levels.

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