



2014 Chairmanship OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Conference

THE ROLE OF THE OSCE IN ADDRESSING CURRENT TERRORIST CHALLENGES

Fact sheet for the media

1. General information

- The 2014 OSCE-wide counter-terrorism is organized by the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship with the support of the Transnational Threats Department (TNT), in close cooperation with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).
- The conference will gather around 200 representatives from OSCE participating States, Partners for Cooperation, international organizations and civil society at the Jungfrau Victoria Hotel in Interlaken, Switzerland.
- Three issues will be discussed during this conference: the financing of terrorism and especially the topic of “kidnapping for ransom”, the importance of legality, transparency and accountability in the fight against terrorism, and the phenomenon of “Individuals Taking Part in Violent Hostilities Within or Outside the OSCE Area”, the so-called “foreign fighters”.

2. Topics

Kidnapping for ransom

- Terrorists in search for financial resources target foreign nationals for their potential financial value as hostages. Ransom payments are becoming an increasingly important revenue for terrorist groups.
- The number of kidnappings is on the rise. Moreover, the payments are fuelling further kidnappings and therefore put citizens of OSCE participating States at higher risks.

Objectives

- Switzerland has been at the forefront in the fight against the financing of terrorism. In order to effectively counter terrorism, it is important to undermine its funding, also by taking measures against the so-called “kidnappings for ransom”.
- By including this issue into the Interlaken conference, the Swiss Chairmanship seeks to a) raise awareness of the general public on its no-ransom policy b) outreach to other participating States in order to develop and strengthen an international front for a no-ransom policy in case of kidnappings with a terrorist background and c) develop possible international cooperation with other participating States that might be used in case of kidnappings.

Ensuring Legality, Transparency and Accountability in Counter-Terrorism

- In the context of the fight against terrorism, respect for the principles of legality, transparency and accountability ensures that counter-terrorism policies and practices are compliant with human rights.
- Moreover, the lack of an adequate legal basis, the non-disclosure of relevant information, as well as the absence of effective accountability mechanisms for counter-terrorism measures not only reduce public trust in state's efforts against terrorism, but also undermine the effectiveness of such efforts and can thus contribute to the spread of terrorism.

Objectives

- Switzerland puts a strong emphasis on the respect of international human rights standards and law in the fight against terrorism.
- By including this issue into the Interlaken conference, the Swiss Chairmanship seeks to encourage participating States to:
 - a) comply with the requirement of legality by adopting predictable, precise and accessible counter-terrorism laws that are in compliance with international human rights law, refugee and humanitarian law;
 - b) ensure the transparency and the accountability of the State for measures in the fight against terrorism which have human rights implications;
 - c) put in place necessary measures and mechanisms to prosecute human rights violations in the fight against terrorism.

“Foreign Fighters”

- Participating States are facing a situation where individuals under their respective jurisdiction are departing, or seeking to do so, in order to join armed groups and take part in violent confrontations, e.g. in Syria or Somalia.
- There are estimates that about 2000 citizens from participating States of the OSCE are currently engaged as foreign fighters in Syria. Participating States have to deal with the return of some of these individuals who may pose a threat to their security.

Objectives

- By including this issue into the Interlaken conference, the Swiss Chairmanship seeks to foster a better understanding of the phenomenon by promoting
 - a) the exchange of information on characteristics of the phenomenon (Who are these people? Why are they going there? Are there networks involved? etc.) between participating States, Partners for Cooperation, international organizations, and civil society; and
 - b) an exchange between participating States, Partners for Cooperation, international organizations and civil society on how to deal with foreign fighters while making use of the specific advantages of the OSCE.
- The Swiss Chairmanship also seeks to make a contribution to the international discussion that takes places in other fora (Global Counterterrorism Forum etc.) on this issue.