

Terrorism: A Global Challenge

From the United States to Indonesia, from London to Egypt, terrorism is a threat that affects people around the world. In his report, *In Larger Freedom*, Secretary General Kofi Annan urged countries to develop a comprehensive agreement to confront terrorism.

What would a comprehensive agreement include?

Legal definition of terrorism

Countries need to agree on a common definition of terrorism as any intentional attack on civilians and noncombatants by non-state actors for political purposes. This would be a major step for the UN, defying some countries' notion that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." The failure to develop a clear definition in the past has harmed global counterterrorism efforts. It is important for the international community to fight this threat collectively and make it clear that violence against civilians is never an acceptable tactic, even for the noblest causes.

Obligations

Countries that sign onto this convention would be obligated to:

- Cooperate in the prevention and punishment of acts of terrorism;
- Establish terrorism as a criminal act under their respective domestic laws;
- Refrain from organizing, initiating, facilitating, financing, assisting or participating in terrorist activities in other countries;
- Ensure that their country is not being used for the training & preparation of terrorist activities;
- Make sure that anyone seeking political asylum has not been involved in terrorist activities;
- Investigate and if needed, take into custody, anyone who has been accused of terrorism on their territory.

A multi-faceted approach

A comprehensive response cannot only focus on military, police & intelligence measures without efforts to promote good governance and human rights. In March 2005, while commemorating the Madrid bombings in Spain, Secretary General Kofi Annan asked countries to commit to the five D's:

Dissuade disaffected groups from choosing terrorism as a tactic to achieve their goals

- Address the causes of terrorism such as occupation and other political grievances;
- Promote social & political rights, rule of law & democratic reform;
- Combat organized crime, reduce poverty & unemployment;
- Stop states from collapsing or becoming failed states

Deny terrorists the means to carry out their attacks.

- Ensure that travel & financial sanctions against *Al Qaida* members & associated bodies are fully enforced;
- Take more effective measures against money-laundering;
- Deny terrorists access to nuclear materials.

Deter states from supporting terrorist groups

- Confront states that harbor and assist terrorists and impose targeted sanctions if necessary;
- Inform that if they give any kind of support to terrorists the Security Council will not hesitate to use coercive measures against them.

FACT SHEET

Develop state capacity to prevent terrorism

- Make all states more capable and responsible: this means promoting good governance and rule of law with professional police and security forces who respect human rights;
- Assist poor countries to build the capacity they need to combat terrorism;
- Help every state to develop and maintain an efficient criminal justice system;
- Help states give all their citizens a modern education that encourages scientific inquiry & free thought;
- Strengthen public health – build systems, especially in poor countries, to prevent, monitor & respond to natural or man made outbreaks of deadly infectious diseases.

Defend Human Rights

- Uphold human rights as an essential element of any counter-terrorism strategy.

World Summit 2005

From September 14-16, the United Nations hosted the largest gathering of world leaders in history for a “once-in-a-generation opportunity to take bold decisions in the areas of development, security, human rights and reform of the United Nations.” More than 150 heads of states came together to collectively strengthen the United Nations, making it more effective for the 21st century. Although countries reaffirmed their condemnation of “terrorism in all its forms and manifestations,” they could not agree on a clear definition of terrorism that would pull the moral rug out from under terrorists masquerading as “freedom fighters.” Leaders also agreed to work with the Secretary General’s counter terrorism strategy to confront this global challenge.

Terrorism is a global threat that no nation can solve alone, and it is important for the United States to work with other countries to confront this challenge. The United Nations has long been active in confronting international terrorism and has developed thirteen conventions to counter it. Following the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the U.S. played a prominent role in creating the Counter-Terrorism Committee at the UN through the Security Council. The Counter-Terrorism Committee has since become the UN’s leading body in promoting collective action against international terrorism.

About Citizens for Global Solutions

Citizens for Global Solutions envisions a future in which nations work together to abolish war, protect our rights and freedoms, and solve the problems facing humanity that no nation can solve alone. This vision requires effective democratic global institutions that will apply the rule of law while respecting the diversity and autonomy of national and local communities. We work to build political will for our vision in the United States by educating Americans about our global interdependence, communicating global concerns to public officials, and developing proposals to create, reform, and strengthen international institutions such as the United Nations.

For more information on this paper contact Citizens for Global Solutions Executive Vice-President, Don Kraus, at dkraus@globalsolutions.org or 202-546-3950 ext. 103. Fatema Abdul Rasul, a Scoville Peace Fellow at Citizens for Global Solutions, was the paper’s lead writer.

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