

International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism

“Remembering the victims of terrorism and doing more to support them is essential to help them rebuild their lives and heal. This includes our efforts to work with parliamentarians and governments to draft and adopt legislation and national strategies to help victims”¹.

Today, August 21, the world celebrates the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism². The Middle East and North Africa region is one of the most affected regions affected by terrorism, and where victims of terrorism are concentrated. We do not see any improvement, and the number of victims of terrorism is increasing. Despite the efforts made by the United Nations and its agencies, which deal with victims of terrorism, it acknowledges that a large number of Member States lack the resources and capabilities to meet the necessary needs, which leads to neglect of victims of terrorism and makes their rehabilitation and integration into society more challenging.

In September 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy³, and defined four main measures:

1. Measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism,
2. Measures to prevent and combat terrorism,
3. Measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard, and
4. Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.

The strategy has given a great deal of respect for human rights and considered it part of the solution. Failure to respect human rights and deprive the victims of their humanity are among the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, and that the most effective way to combat terrorism is to take measures that respect human dignity and uphold the rule of law. The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism⁴ emphasized that the destruction and burning of homes, the killing of innocents, and other grave violations are steps that contribute to the spread of violence, especially if they are accompanied by arbitrary measures by states.

The member states of the General Assembly affirmed their “determination to make every effort to reach an agreement on and conclude a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, including by resolving the outstanding issues related to the legal definition and scope of the acts covered by the convention, so that it can serve as an effective instrument to counter terrorism”⁵, however, 14 years and still no convention.

Although the United Nations General Assembly adopted, at its 49th session, a definition of terrorism⁶, the absence of a comprehensive convention providing a legal definition of terrorism has led some countries to use terrorism as a pretext to eliminate their political opponents or target segments of society under the pretext of combating terrorism. Also, in the absence of an international legal text defining terrorism, the word terrorism has become just another derogatory word, rather than a descriptor of a specific type of activity. Usually, people use the term as a disapproving label for a whole variety of phenomena which they do not like, without bothering to define precisely what constitutes terroristic behavior.

In Libya, under the pretext of war on, and combating, terrorism, hundreds of thousands of residents were displacement from their homes, properties were confiscated, dozens of victims of extrajudicial killings, thousands of people languishing in prisons and detention centers without trial and in inhumane conditions, and vast residential areas were destroyed in Derna, Benghazi and Tripoli. Among the examples of using terrorism to target political opponents is the list issued by "Defense and National Security" committee of the Libyan House of Representatives, in which the committee accused 75 Libyans⁷ of terrorism. The list included politicians, diplomats, parliamentarians, media professionals, academics, and activists.

Human Rights Solidarity reminds the Libyan authorities in Tripoli; that they bear the responsibility to protect the lives of their citizens and all individuals residing in Libya’s territory, and that they must take appropriate steps in order to protect the lives of individuals; that it is their obligation to conduct investigations into all terrorist acts in order to ensure accountability and protect the right of victims of terrorism; and enable the victims to form organizations and associations to represent them.

Human Rights Solidarity Tripoli - Libya

¹ United Nations: “[Secretary General’s Message for the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, 2020](#)”.

² United Nations: “[International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism, 21 August](#)”, **background:**

The General Assembly, in its [resolution 72/165 \(2017\)](#), established 21 August as the International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism in order to honor and support the victims and survivors of terrorism and to promote and protect the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The last three outcome resolutions of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy review ([A/RES/66/282](#), [A/RES/68/276](#) and [A/RES/72/284](#)) have all emphasized the important role of victims in countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism as well as recognizing and upholding their human rights.

The sixth review resolution ([A/RES/72/284](#)), particularly notes that building resilience of victims and their families, through the provision of proper support and assistance immediately after an attack and in the longer-term is a major step forward in recognizing that victims who are resilient are less vulnerable to the impacts of terrorism and are able to cope, heal and recover more rapidly after an attack.

³ United Nations: “[The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy](#)”, Resolution (60/288) adopted by the General Assembly on September 8, 2006.

⁴ United Nations: “[United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism](#)”.

⁵ The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, preamble.

⁶ UN General Assembly: “Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them”, Article (3) of the Annex to ([A/RES/49/60](#)), December 9, 1994. The General Assembly reiterated this definition in its resolution ([A/RES/51/210](#)) on January 16, 1997, and again in its resolution ([A/RES/66/105](#)) on December 9, 2011. The UN Security Council adopted a similar definition in its resolution [1566 \(2004\)](#) on October 8, 2004.

⁷ Aljazeera Net: “[Libya's ambassador to Malaysia denounces the inclusion of his name on the list of terrorism](#)”, June 15, 2017.