

**Report
on the role of subnational authorities in the Mediterranean region
in combating radicalisation and violent extremism
among young people**

This report was drawn up by the rapporteur Mohamed Kamal El Daly, Governor of Giza, and adopted at the 9th ARLEM plenary session which took place on 21 February 2018 in Giza, Egypt.

Due to its unprecedented spread, reaching almost every part of the world, terrorism is one of the most dangerous and complex phenomena facing our contemporary world. This means that its geographic scope is extending, making it difficult to restrict it to one specific region. This is a new dimension that multiplies its threats. Extending beyond all borders and nationalities, this phenomenon is found in the Middle East, in Africa, in Europe and in the USA. It even recruits members of all nationalities in both the East and the West. This affirms its ongoing ability to divide and spread. This challenge therefore imposes responsibilities on local authorities to play a key role in fighting bigotry and extremism among the youth.

There are key factors that allow terrorism to grow and spread quickly and which, until recent decades, were not so extremely widespread. At the top of the list are extremist trans-border ideas and the media, with their conventional tools employed by terrorist organisations. Terrorist organisations own some satellite channels, as well as social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and use them to instigate and spread extremist ideas in order to achieve their goals on a large scale, especially among young people. Young people are keen users of these means and this factor makes it easy to recruit them as combatants. In short, the most modern and advanced technologies are used to promote the most backward and destructive of ideas and no effective control measures have been put in place. It is undoubtedly the case that economic challenges experienced by young people result in it being more likely that they fall into the grip of terrorism and this gives momentum to extremist ideas. Added to this is an increasing use of media and modern communication means, which, in turn, increases international and regional conflicts in the Middle East and Mediterranean regions, in particular. Another element that has an impact on terrorism is illegal immigration. It is worth noting that the funding and support that some countries provide to these terrorist organisations plays a key role in their continuing criminal activity. For these reasons, confronting the phenomenon of terrorism and bringing about tangible results requires an international synergy of efforts. What concerns us here, however, are local efforts.

Recommendations:

1. Promoting the role of local authorities

In order to prevent extremism, local people must be given opportunities, and local councils should play a key role in designing and implementing programmes that respond to the actual needs of young people in various local communities. Local authorities in the region need to develop awareness, social integration and community-based participatory development programmes that focus on fighting extremism while, at the same time, enhance the young person's sense of belonging to their community, and increase trust among individuals, their local representatives, or members of parliament.

2. Participation of young people

Youth initiatives in societies that are highly vulnerable to recruitment by extremism, such as those in border areas, in particular, should be given financial support. Local independent preventive initiatives for young people should be encouraged and supported because the youth in local communities are

more aware of their peers' grievances and motivations, and help should be given to increase their awareness and prevent them from embracing extremist views.

3. Enhancing the role of women in dealing with youth extremism

Efforts to fight extremism among young people need to include the integration of women at all levels and see them treated as equal partners with men. Preventive programmes, targeting female teachers in schools, especially in socially marginalised areas, and training them in anti-extremism measures can lead to increased awareness, as can psychosocial and social support offered to vulnerable female students. Female teachers can also develop communication with mothers in local communities in order to increase their awareness and skills in protecting their children against embracing extremist trends.

4. Social and economic investment

The correlation between extremism and poverty varies from country to country. Economic growth and job creation can improve integration of young people into local communities, but job creation must go hand in hand with educational reform, particularly with regard to vocational training.

5. Cultural and sporting investment

In an effort to combat the problem of cultural desertification, alternative cultural and sports facilities must be created and opened up to young people. There must be a variety of places where young people can spend their leisure time. Recreational activities should be made available at an affordable cost and, generally, there should be spaces where young people can express their ideas. Central governments must increase the budget of local and regional authorities to enable them to contribute to the development of social, cultural and sports infrastructure.

6. Empowering civil society organisations

Support should be provided for grass-roots civil society organisations to design programmes for dialogue and knowledge exchange with marginalised young people and their families, to help protect the security of their communities, and to prevent children from joining terrorist groups.

7. Social harmony

Programmes must be developed to improve social harmony and equality between host communities and refugees. To do so will require the focus being placed on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and segments of society, including poor people, street children and nomads in social development programmes, as well as an easing of governmental rules and regulations for these groups, to help integrate them economically, socially and politically into their local communities.

8. Recommendations to local authorities

There are several preventive measures, explained below:

- Reforming the education system, creating and improving vocational training opportunities, and improving students' skills in critical thinking; training teachers to recognise the warnings or signs of extremism and how to seek support to deal with these signs; while maintaining a positive relationship with students and developing the spaces available in large schools, turning them into local community centres where students, their families and community members can spend their free time.
- Local boards and departments of education should communicate and engage with moderate propagandists and preachers.
- Efforts must be made to address factors that may make individuals more vulnerable to extremism, including economic deprivation, lack of vocational training and job opportunities, and discrimination.
- To fight extremism, local authorities need to go beyond a one-dimensional approach, which focuses only on security measures.
- Local authorities or municipalities in the Mediterranean region should form partnerships with their counterparts - which have developed various models for fighting extremism - in order to benefit from their expertise and best practices.
- Improvements must be made to the technical and human capacities of the local communities to address extremism.
- There should be improvements in communication and coordination between states or governorates and local councils and different municipalities, as a result of which local representatives, practitioners and community workers can meet on a regular basis to exchange knowledge and best-practice, and develop local measures to eradicate extremism.
- Local authorities should give priority to the establishment of community centres in rural and urban marginalised neighbourhoods and encourage dialogue and volunteering.
- Local authorities should provide vocational training for young people (men and women) in local communities and specialists in local authority organisations, and improve cooperation between the two groups to implement effective preventive programmes.
- Local authorities, in cooperation with civil society organisations, should give priority to integrating women (mothers, female students, female specialists and female community activists), as factors in combatting extremism, in all anti-extremism programmes. Programmes should prioritise the raising of mothers' awareness of how to prevent their children from becoming extremists through the use of social media and television programmes. Female preachers should be trained to give lectures to mothers in places of worship and schools in poor rural and urban areas.
- Influential figures from local communities should be integrated into all community centre programmes in order to exploit their social networks, contacts and impact, to provide protection and security for the population, and to promote social cohesion.
- Communities should be encouraged to show openness and accept their young people, who should be empowered to participate in decision-making as well.

- Improvements should be made to mental and psychological health facilities. Their staff should be trained, and public awareness of their problems shall be increased, taking into account the recommendations of the WHO in this regard.
- Focusing attention on the concrete service areas and highlighting efforts in sustainable development, through the media, in order to prevent exploitation by extremist factions of the economic and social conditions experienced by some countries.
- Paying attention to educating children and young people about belonging, patriotism, the dangers of terrorism, and applying the Free Reading approach, which affects the way children are shaped, and providing libraries with simplified books that address the mentality of the child at his/her particular age, dealing with social concepts and principles that explain the ideas and concepts of the extremist closed groups, gradually, and their effects on the children, and the need to care and develop businesses and television programmes that address different age groups about this matter and do not limit speech to adults only, so that the information reaches the child in a variety of understandable ways.
- Promoting the role of outstanding students in all fields. These students should give presentations and seminars to young people and students in local communities with the aim of boosting the number of academically outstanding students, on the one hand, and translating knowledge acquired from books into realistic behaviours in the students' lives. This also encourages students to continue to excel, by placing more attention on them and urging parents to grant them appropriate educational care, so that they achieve a sense of self-satisfaction, reflected in academic achievement and the social environment within the community. This also helps students to understand their personalities and identify their personal ability to achieve the required scientific excellence, through:
 - 1) Instructing and guiding students to become good members of society in order to help build the community.
 - 2) Discussing the problems that students may face, and work on solving them.
 - 3) Working on discovering the talents and capabilities of outstanding students and channelling and capitalising on those talents and capabilities to the benefit of the student, in particular, and to the benefit of the community in general.
 - 4) Providing students with free access to public libraries and encouraging them to visit the libraries, to serve their scientific purposes, as well as providing as many moral and material incentives as possible.
 - 5) Preparing workshops and laboratories suitable for conducting scientific and practical experiments so as to allow students to exploit and use their capacity to innovate and to develop them in a positive manner.