

Global Joint Initiative on Preventing Violent Extremism in Prisons Continues Support During COVID-19

The threat of violent extremism in prisons is an issue of growing concern to the international community, presenting complex challenges to Member States, which are much more complicated due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) continues its support to national prison officials to address these complex challenges and responds to new COVID requirements through a global project on preventing violent extremism in prisons.

The project is being implemented jointly with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in coordination with the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UNCTED) and co-funded by the European Union, the Netherlands and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Despite new coronavirus health restrictions, UNODC and the implementing partners continued supporting national officials in Kazakhstan, Tunisia and Uganda. In addition to providing equipment and supplies to allow national prison officials to operate during the COVID crisis safely, UNODC and the project team continued to deliver capacity-building activities on the management of violent extremist prisoners and developed a number of tailored training and resource materials. In Kazakhstan, UNODC worked with prison officials to establish a Prison Staff Training Centre on Preventing Violent Extremism in Prisons. In Kazakhstan and Uganda, officials pushed forward the development of critical frameworks for carrying out prison security audits and the classification of prisoners. Finally, in Uganda, six training modules on preventing and combating violent extremism were developed and integrated into the basic training curricula for the Prison Academy and Training School.

Furthermore, in Tunisia, a country workplan of assistance was agreed, and the first project steering committee meeting held in September 2020, with the participation of UNODC Executive Director, Ms. Ghada Waly. At the meeting Ms. Waly thanked the Ministry of Justice of Tunisia for convening the high-level meeting, noting that “A prison system managed in compliance with the Nelson Mandela Rules will offer powerful barriers against violent extremism taking root in prisons, and provide a strong foundation on which effective interventions can be built.”

Throughout the year, UNODC and the project team have also worked closely to build strategic relationships in the beneficiary countries, supporting national prison officials to engage with civil society organizations to support the rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners and to establish local stakeholder networks for preventing and combating violent extremism. With its unique knowledge of the needs of the prison environment, the project team also strengthened partnerships with governments and international partners in preventing the spread of violent extremism in prisons.

Check out [this video](#) for an in-depth look at the recent achievements of the project.