

Building synergies between global and national initiatives on preventing violent extremism in prisons of Tunisia



Tunisia has experienced the direct consequences of terrorist attacks, as a response to which the Government adopted a proactive counter-terrorism approach, adopting a number of key measures to address the threat. This has included, ratifying amendments to the 2015 Countering Terrorism and Money Laundering Law in 2019, scaling up efforts in preventing violent extremism, assuming a seat at the United Nations Security

Council Counter-Terrorism Committee for 2020-2021, and taking steps to address the risk of radicalization to violence in prisons as a means of furthering violent extremist agendas. To effectively address the increasing concern of radicalization in prisons the Ministry of Justice of Tunisia endorsed the country workplan of the global joint initiative on preventing the spread of violent extremism in the prison settings.

To mark the start of the implementation of the joint global initiative “Supporting the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and Preventing Radicalisation to Violence in Prisons” in Tunisia, on 28 September 2020, the Ministry of Justice of Tunisia hosted a high-level meeting on “Preventing Violent Extremism in Prisons: Strategic Planning and Effective Implementation” in Tunisia. The meeting was convened by His Excellency Justice Minister Mohamed Boussetta.

This initiative is a four-year global programme implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) in close coordination with the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UNCTED). It is co-funded by the European Union, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Netherlands. Its main objective is to improve capacities of selected beneficiary countries (Tunisia, Kazakhstan and Uganda) to prevent the progression to violent extremism and to effectively manage violent extremist prisoners, while respecting human rights standards. In Tunisia, the global initiative will work in four priority areas: (i) security and safety, (ii) risks and needs assessment of violent extremist prisoners, (iii) prison-based rehabilitation programmes and (iv) post-release support and social reintegration into society.

The high-level meeting also marked the official launch of “Tawassol”, a Tunisian national project implemented in partnership with UNODC, aiming to socially and economically

rehabilitate and reintegrate prisoners who have been involved in terrorist activities or have been radicalized to violence. This project is co-funded by the United Kingdom and the Netherlands and promotes the implementation of tailored prison-based rehabilitation programmes as well as effective post-release support, involving relevant institutions and/or civil society organisations.

Convening the meeting, His Excellency Justice Minister of Tunisia Mohamed Boussetta remarked that “The signing of the global and national initiatives reflects the commitment of the Tunisian Minister of Justice and the State to the global approach on preventing violent extremism”.

Welcoming participants of the high-level meeting, Ms. Ghada Waly, UNODC Executive Director welcomed the launch of the global initiative in Tunisia and stated that “UNODC strongly recommends to embed interventions to prevent violent extremism in prisons into broader prison reform efforts, which is far more effective than promoting standalone interventions which target only violent extremist prisoners”. She emphasized that “shortcomings, which can contribute to a sense of despair and frustration among the general prison population, may provide dangerous entry points for attempts to radicalize prisoners to violence”.



Check out this video for an in-depth look at the 2020 achievements of the global initiative on the management of violent extremist prisoners and the prevention of radicalization to violence in three beneficiary countries – Kazakhstan, Tunisia and Uganda <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-eT9YDpaBg&t=2s>