

Joint Global Initiative on Preventing Violent Extremism in Prisons Highlights 2020 Success



Despite COVID-19 challenges, the joint global initiative on preventing violent extremism in prisons ended 2020 by highlighting the many successes of the project in supporting Member States to address the complex challenges of addressing violent extremism in prisons which have been made all the more difficult by the COVID pandemic.

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

In 2020, UNODC and the implementing partners continued supporting national officials in Kazakhstan, Tunisia and Uganda, implementing 45 activities despite the health restrictions. These activities included building more effective dynamic security and intelligence frameworks, developing prisoner classification systems, and creating a rehabilitative environment in prisons. National officials noted the importance of these activities, with General Major Meyram Ayubayev, Deputy Chairperson, Kazakhstan Prison Committee emphasizing at the national coordination meeting that “Dynamic security, or maintaining relationships of mutual respect and trust between staff and prisoners, is by far the best way of keeping prisons safe and secure, as well as encouraging prisoners to engage willingly to rehabilitation programmes.”

In Tunisia, a country workplan of assistance was endorsed, and the first Programme Steering Committee meeting held with the participation of Minister of Justice for Tunisia, the Honorable Mohamed Boussetta. At the event, the Minister stated that “The signing of the global and national initiatives reflects the Tunisian Government’s commitment to the global approach on preventing violent extremism.”

Promoting governments’ ownership and sustainability were at the core of programme implementation in 2020. In Kazakhstan, UNODC worked with prison officials to establish a Prison Staff Training Centre on Preventing Violent Extremism in Prisons and built the capacity of national trainers to delivery courses on PVE. By the end of 2020, the Centre had surpassed its annual goal of training more than 200 prison

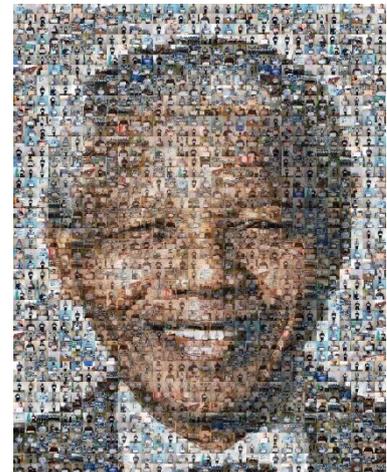


officers. In Uganda, training modules on preventing violent extremism in prisons were developed and integrated into the Prison Academy and Training School basic curriculum while building the skills of Ugandan prison trainers to deliver the courses. In addition, prisoner classification frameworks were developed jointly with the prison authorities of Kazakhstan and Uganda to differentiate prisoners who present different security, custody and treatment needs and therefore have different correctional management and intervention requirements.

Supporting COVID-19 preparedness and response the programme also provided technical guidance, protective equipment and supplies to allow national prison administrations to operate safely during the pandemic crisis.

During 2020, UNODC and implementing partners worked closely to build strategic relationships, 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. The programme also promoted the critical role of rehabilitation and social reintegration of violent extremist prisoners during an event at the 2020 Virtual United Nations Counter-Terrorism Week.

Highlighting the critical role prisons can play in ensuring public safety, including through the effective rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners back into society, UNODC Executive Director, Ms. Ghada Waly, remarked on Nelson Mandela Day, “The COVID-19 crisis has put the spotlight on prison overcrowding, poor conditions and lack of resources, and the acute risks these deficiencies pose to 11 million people in prisons worldwide, and the health of all communities. We have a collective responsibility for prisoners’ humane treatment and social reintegration. And we need to value the work of prison staff, who deliver a social service that too often goes unrecognized.”



On behalf of the European Union, Mr. Oliver Luyckx, Head of Unit for Security in the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), in the European Commission, noted that “Preventing and managing violent extremist prisoners is an important priority for the European Commission since we know the potential risks these individuals pose, especially upon release. This important endeavour requires a multi-agency approach between prison and probation administrations, judicial authorities, police forces, local governments, social workers and other local actors, including local communities. In this field, UNODC is showing sustained dedication and leadership through our joint programme, implemented in Kazakhstan, Tunisia and Uganda”.



Reflecting on the results of the programme implementation in Uganda in 2020, Dr. Johnson Omuhunde Rwashote Byabashaija, Commissioner General, Uganda Prisons Service underlined that “The generous funding from the European Union, the Netherlands and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism contributed to the successful social reintegration of ex-prisoners through promoting access to justice and good prison management.”

Check out this video (available in Arabic, English and Russian) for an in-depth look at the 2020 achievements of the global joint initiative: <https://yadi.sk/d/xLoyOpxwyFmliw?w=1>