

**FHSMUN XXIX
ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE**

OIC CONVENTION ON COMBATING INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

“Convinced that terrorism cannot be justified in any way, and that it should therefore be unambiguously condemned in all its forms and manifestations, and all its actions, means and practices, whatever its origin, causes or purposes, including direct or indirect actions of States;”¹

Introduction

The scourge of international terrorism affects people from every corner of the world, even though most images in the Western world convey the impression that terrorism is only directed against Western countries and their allies within the Muslim world. Terrorist attacks against Muslim civilians are, lamentably, all too common as well. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has committed itself to combating terrorism and to upholding “the tenets of the tolerant Islamic Sharia which reject all forms of violence and terrorism, and in particular specially those based on extremism and call for protection of human rights.”² The OIC’s Convention on Combating International Terrorism entered into force in November 2002 but its acceptance is still far from universal. Obtaining universal ratification from the OIC’s 56 member states must be a priority for the OIC delegates.

While the OIC Convention defines terrorism in its first Article, the Preamble confirms “the legitimacy of the right of peoples to struggle against foreign occupation and colonialist and racist regimes by all means, including armed struggle.”³ These provisions are critical for OIC member states to continue to support the Palestinians in their struggle for a state. Support from specific OIC states for Islamic rebels in Jammu-Kashmir, Chechnya, and even in the recently independent state of Kosovo tends to be more contentious than support for a Palestinian state. The OIC’s exemption of peoples fighting against colonialism and foreign occupation will not necessarily be accepted or honored by non-OIC states.

Preventing terrorism using weapons of mass destruction (WMD’s), biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons, is clearly a global priority but the potential for illicit, or black market, sales of WMD’s and related technologies continues to vex policymakers worldwide. The proliferation of these weapons and technologies, especially nuclear weapons, elevate the risks for all countries, particularly if poorly secured or guarded materials are sold or stolen. The most high-profile case of nuclear proliferation involving the Muslim world revolves around the global network established by Pakistan’s chief

¹ Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism Preamble.

² OIC, OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism Preamble.

³ OIC, OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism Preamble.

nuclear scientist, Abdul Qadeer (A.Q.) Khan.⁴ The continued threat of WMD proliferation and terrorism requires sustained cooperation between all countries.

Combating Terrorism in the Muslim World

While Western commentators, journalists, and politicians focus overwhelmingly on spectacular, large-scale terrorist attacks and incidents such as September 11, 2001 or the horrific bombings in Madrid, Spain in March 2004, or London in July 2005, a careful examination of daily headlines will provide a litany of terrorist attacks within the Muslim world itself.⁵ Few, if any, of the OIC's member states have been spared in recent years; indeed, many of the governments, and their supporters, of OIC member states have been the primary targets of these attacks, as well as rival ethnic and religious groups.⁶ The most obvious Muslim targets of terrorist violence in recent years would include the following countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen.

Effectively combating terrorism in the Muslim world is in many ways no different from combating terrorism in other parts of the world. Unlike many other conventions against terrorism, however, the OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism does define terrorism. "'Terrorism' means any act of violence or threat thereof notwithstanding its motives or intentions perpetrated to carry out an individual or collective criminal plan with the aim of terrorizing people or threatening to harm them or imperiling their lives, honor, freedoms, security or rights or exposing the environment or any facility or public or private property to hazards or occupying or seizing them, or endangering a national resource, or international facilities, or threatening the stability, territorial integrity, political unity or sovereignty of independent states."⁷ As will be discussed below, the OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism explicitly provides exceptions for peoples fighting for independence and self-determination, most notably the Palestinians.

Iraq

As conflict in Iraq nears its fifth anniversary, the human toll of the fighting has been obscured, at least within much of the Western mainstream media, by arguments about power sharing arrangements and the distribution of oil revenues amongst the 3 primary Iraqi communities: Shia Muslims; Sunni Muslims; and Kurds. While these communities have experienced difficulties before, it is abundantly clear that recent events have created greater problems and laid the foundations for future hostilities. Western politicians and commentators have descried the "sectarian violence" between primarily Shia and Sunni Muslim communities in Iraq, but they have rarely portrayed the Iraqis as victims of terrorist attacks. Within the Muslim world, however, outrage and despair have been the natural reactions to the vicious crimes being repeated on a seemingly daily basis.

⁴ *BBC News*, "On the trail of the black market bombs" February 12, 2004.

⁵ *BBC News*, "Dozens die in latest Afghan bomb" February 18, 2008.

⁶ *The Economist*, "Pakistan: Ballots and Bombs" February 18, 2008.

⁷ OIC, OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism Article 1.

When the famous Golden Mosque in Samarra was attacked and its golden dome destroyed in February 2006, condemnation of the attack as a terrorist incident was swift and widespread.⁸ The government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki promised to use “maximum force” against terrorists in Iraq while simultaneously calling for reconciliation and national plan of action to protect Iraqis from further violence. Unfortunately, the linking of his government to well-armed Shia death squads targeting Sunnis in Baghdad has compromised his own legitimacy within Iraq. In June 2007, the Samarra mosque, a Shia Muslim shrine, was attacked a second time. Within one day, 3 Sunni Muslim mosques in Iraq had been attacked in Baghdad, Iskandariya, and Mahaweel and Sunni Muslim civilians repeated their fears of further reprisals by Shia death squads.⁹

Terrorist attacks directed against outsiders or those perceived to be working with them have also become a mainstay of contemporary Iraq. While armed resistance to the occupation of Iraq by the United States, United Kingdom, and other multinational components of the “Coalition of the Willing” had been expected, the horrific carnage that would be visited upon UN personnel and upon Iraqis who cooperated with the Coalition/multinational forces would terrify much of the world. On August 19, 2003, a truck bomb detonated outside UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing 19 people, including the Secretary-General’s Special Representative, Sergio Vieira de Mello. Since that attack, the UN and many outside organizations have been understandably reluctant to operate in Iraq.

Much of the terrorist violence within Iraq has been carried out by indigenous Iraqi organizations and militant groups, but outside groups, especially al-Qaeda, have undertaken devastating terrorist attacks against Iraqi civilians as well as US, UK, and other multinational forces. While Saddam Hussein’s security forces had largely prevented al-Qaeda from establishing any significant presence in Iraq before 2003, the current war and political landscape in Iraq have been affected by al-Qaeda operations. Estimates of the number of foreign fighters and jihadists who have entered Iraq vary considerably and it is very difficult to pinpoint the numbers or their countries of origin. Al-Qaeda in Iraq, a militant organization claiming at least loose affiliation with Osama bin Laden’s more globally oriented organization, has been blamed for a large number of assassinations, bombings, and other terrorist attacks over the past 4 years. In December 2007, as the death tolls for Iraqi civilians and multinational forces continued to stay well below where they had been in the summer of 2007, the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior claimed that 75% of al-Qaeda’s facilities and hideouts in Iraq had been destroyed.¹⁰ Combating al-Qaeda in Iraq will require concerted action by the Iraqi government, multinational forces within Iraq, and Iraq’s neighbors. A commitment to resolving political disputes without violence must also be established and implemented by the relevant civil society and political actors within Iraq.

⁸ *BBC News*, “Samarra bombs outrage Mideast press” February 23, 2006.

⁹ *BBC News*, “Reprisals hit Iraq Sunni mosques” June 14, 2007.

¹⁰ *BBC News*, “Al-Qaeda in Iraq ‘reduced by 75%’” December 29, 2007.

Afghanistan

The troubled country of Afghanistan has been plagued by violence for at least thirty years now. The Taliban's willingness to extend sanctuary to Osama bin Laden after his expulsion from Sudan in 1996 would intertwine their destinies over the next 6 years. In the aftermath of the removal of the Taliban from power, terrorist violence against Afghan civilians rose dramatically. While the violence has occurred mostly in the south, in areas where the Taliban remain strongest, Kabul is not immune to terrorist attacks. In January 2008, a Taliban suicide team forced its way into the Serena Hotel in Kabul and killed 8 hotel employees and guests.¹¹ UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reported to the Security Council in September 2007 that "an intensifying Taliban-led insurgency that increasingly relies on suicide bombing and other terrorist tactics is undermining confidence in the future and denying Government and international aid organizations to a growing number of districts."¹² As the UN, NATO, and Afghanistan's government all strive to prevent a further escalation of terrorist violence in 2008, comparable to the rise in suicide bombings and terrorist attacks in 2007, it is imperative that these efforts be supported and supplemented by the Organization of the Islamic Conferences (OIC).

Pakistan

No discussion of contemporary terrorist violence in the Muslim world would be representative if it ignored the violence and tragedies that have recently unfolded in Pakistan. While the world's attention shifted to Pakistan in the aftermath of the December death of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, her return to Pakistan only two months prior was marred by a horrific bombing that killed over 130 people.¹³ While the results of the most recent election have been hailed as crucial for a sustainable democratic republic in Pakistan, the low voter turnout was attributed largely to legitimate fears of widespread political violence. Now that the elections have been concluded, the international community, including the OIC, must continue to monitor developments in Pakistan. Pakistan must also increase its efforts to prevent cross-border raids and attacks in Afghanistan and constructively engage the Afghan government in efforts to eliminate common threats.¹⁴ Pakistan must also increase its supervision over the madrassas along its border with Afghanistan as many of these schools have been directly affiliated with the Taliban and with terrorist attacks within Pakistan itself. Pakistani security forces have carried out episodic security operations in the so-called tribal areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border but the heavy-handed nature of these operations risks further alienating local inhabitants.¹⁵ Furthermore, continued support for Islamic rebels in Jammu-Kashmir, organizations that India considers to be terrorist organizations, may seem to contradict some of Pakistan's claims to be aggressively fighting terrorism.

¹¹ *The Economist*, "A bubble bursts" January 17, 2008.

¹² Ban Ki-moon, "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General" A/62/345-S/2007/555 September 21, 2007 p. 1.

¹³ *BBC News*, "Bhutto points finger over blasts" October 19, 2007.

¹⁴ *BBC News*, "Pakistan urged to fight extremism" July 27, 2007.

¹⁵ *BBC News*, "Pakistan madrasa raid 'kills 80'" October 30, 2006.

Somalia

To more fully comprehend the devastating impact that prolonged terrorism exerts on a society, a careful observer would do well to examine Somalia. Perennially labeled a “failing state” by the international community, Somalia has not had a truly functioning government since 1991. While a transitional authority has been established, with the assistance of the United States and Ethiopia in particular, its authority and legitimacy are not well established and Somalia remains a proverbial hornet’s nest for terrorist organizations and recruiting. Somalia remains a crucial strategic front in the global war on terrorism that is being waged by Islamic and non-Islamic countries but its internal instability continues to make it an enticing target for criminal and terrorist organizations. By 2004, Somali diplomatic passports could be obtained for as little as \$100 USD and many countries began refusing entry to anyone holding a Somali passport.¹⁶

Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remains a focal point for terrorist organizations as well as efforts aimed at combating terrorism. Osama bin Laden and most of the September 11, 2001 hijackers hailed from Saudi Arabia, a large part of terrorist financing goes through Saudi Arabia, and the government of Saudi Arabia has itself been targeted by terrorists repeatedly over the past 10-15 years. In May 2003, bombing attacks killed over 30 people in the capital of Riyadh and the Saudi security forces subsequently cracked down even harder than before on suspected terrorist organizations.¹⁷ In August 2005, the United States closed its embassy for several days in response to heightened terror alerts and in October 2007, King Abdullah warned that it could take 20 to 30 years for Saudi Arabia to eradicate the scourge of terrorism from within his country. While it is significant that Saudi Arabia has acknowledged that combating terrorism is a lengthy process, it is equally critical that all governments acknowledge that terrorism cannot be ended without enhanced international cooperation. A critical component to combating terrorism within Saudi Arabia and many other Muslim countries will be to convince both Sunni and Shia clerics to cease issuing religious *fatwas* justifying the killing of followers of the opposite sect of Islam.¹⁸

OIC Efforts at Combating Terrorism

Beyond the Convention on Combating on International Terrorism, the Organization of the Islamic Conferences (OIC) has established a longer-term infrastructure within the Muslim world to cooperate. In February 2005, the Saudi government hosted an International Counter-Terrorism Conference in Riyadh. A key proposal that emerged at the conference was the call for the creation of an OIC International Counter-terrorism Center that would, in the words of Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal, “link the national and regional centers by a central

¹⁶ *BBC News*, “UAE ‘bans visas for Somalis’” May 10, 2004.

¹⁷ Frank Gardner, “Saudis turn up the heat on terror” *BBC News* August 2, 2003.

¹⁸ International Crisis Group (ICG), “The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia” Middle East Report No. 45 September 19, 2005 p. 10.

database that allows information to be securely exchanged and updated in a timely manner, especially in tracking down terrorists and obstructing their organizations. The center will support the voluntary exchange and transfer of the technology and training needed to fight and prevent terrorism; coordination in drafting and exchanging legislation and appropriate measures; cooperation in education, the media, and fostering public awareness of the dangers of terrorism and the importance of combating it; and the significance of not promoting an ideology that incites terrorism.”¹⁹ The International Counter-terrorism Center would work directly with the UN, especially the Security Council’s Counter-terrorism Committee (CTC), and Interpol.

Increased cooperation between Muslim states and between Muslim and non-Muslim states is essential to any lasting victories in the global war on terrorism. After September 11, 2001, Muslim governments, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, provided crucial intelligence to the United States and its allies. Muslim and non-Muslim governments have been quick to claim profound and sustained progress in the global war on terrorism but it is not absolutely clear that these claims are fully supported. *The Economist* recently noted that “there are also signs that al-Qaeda is trying to create a front of terrorism in north Africa, based on Algeria’s Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (known by its French acronym, GSPC), which has recently carried out terrorist attacks in the Maghreb.”²⁰ The continued metastatization of al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations means that eliminating terrorism in the Muslim world will require greater cooperation between Muslim governments, while ensuring that human rights are respected. In Article 3 of the OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism, states pledge themselves to establish a “data base...to collect and analyze data on terrorist elements, groups, movements and organizations and monitor developments of the phenomenon of terrorism and successful experiences in combating it.”²¹ Governments must further commit themselves to preventing radical madrassas from churning out new jihadist recruits by the thousands.

Conclusion

Combating terrorism in the Muslim world is absolutely essential to combating terrorism globally. Muslims are frequently the victims of terrorist attacks especially in conflict situations such as Afghanistan, Algeria, and Iraq. Muslim states must also refrain from allowing their territory to be used as staging grounds or safe havens for terrorist organizations engaged in cross-border or global attacks and operations. Governments, including Iran, Pakistan, and Yemen, must prevent their territories from being used by militant leaders planning attacks or seeking to regain previous sanctuaries.²² As OIC member states commit their governments and their societies’ resources to long-term,

¹⁹ Prince Saud Al-Faisal, “Statement to the 60th Session of General Assembly” September 19, 2005. Found at: <http://www.saudiembassy.net/2005News/Statements/TransDetail.asp?cIndex=550>

²⁰ *The Economist*, “Who is winning?” May 2, 2007.

²¹ OIC, OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism Article 3.

²² Robert Windrem, “Al-Qaida reportedly finds safe haven in Iran” *Dateline NBC* June 24, 2005. Found at: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8330976/>

comprehensive solutions to the problems presented by terrorism, they will find that sustained multistakeholder initiatives are fundamental to progress in the global war on terror.

Guiding Questions:

Has your country signed and/or ratified the OIC Convention on Combating International Terrorism? If not, why not?

How has your country cooperated with other OIC member states to prevent and punish acts of terrorism? How might your country expand on these efforts to enhance and intensify national and international efforts to combat terrorism?

If an OIC member state provides assistance to terrorists, including financial, logistical, and military assistance, how should other OIC member states seek to persuade this country to cease providing assistance to known terrorists?

Has your country contributed financially to the OIC Counter-terrorism Center or to the UN's voluntary funds for combating terrorism? Has your country contributed voluntarily to Interpol? How effectively has your country cooperated with Interpol in sharing information about suspected terrorists?

What steps do OIC member states need to take to ensure that they do not violate fundamental human rights in their fight against international terrorism?