



GLOBAL
SECURITY
FORUM

GLOBAL SECURITY FORUM 2018

**OVERVIEW
& FINDINGS
REPORT**

OVERVIEW OF THE FORUM ON RETURNING FOREIGN FIGHTERS: POLICIES AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE THREAT AND PROTECT VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

Dear friends and colleagues,

Last year, we gathered in Doha, Qatar for the *Forum on Returning Foreign Fighters: Policies and Actions to Address the Threat and Protect Vulnerable Communities*. From 30-31 October, we convened to discuss the return of the surviving foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) who had joined the ranks of the Islamic State. The issue at hand was not easy, nor simple. We shared a dialogue about the threat of returnees and the long-term challenges surrounding their deradicalization prospects. We discussed the political, social, legal, and moral dimensions related to repatriating fighters and their families. We also explored what the future could look like for the children of ISIS: to continue a life of hatred and violence, or to be offered a new chance for a normal life in the countries of their birth.

Our inaugural *Forum* gathered officials and experts from over 60 countries, which included Ministers, Ambassadors, heads of intelligence agencies, counter-terrorism practitioners, policy analysts, human rights experts, academics, researchers, internationally recognized journalists, and members of the film industry. The Forum was live-streamed by Al Jazeera and was simultaneously translated between Arabic and English, to ensure the conversation was accessible to those in the region or watching on satellite television across the globe.

During the first day, we analyzed the topic from various perspectives. Our first panel 'Exploring the Threat: Regional Landscape and Global Terrorism Trends' framed the current global terrorism context and the role of FTFs. The panel deconstructed the phenomenon of foreign fighters and addressed specific regional challenges in upholding human rights in the fight against terrorism. Our experts on the 'Rhetoric and Radicalization: The Power of Narrative' panel explored the enduring resonance of salafi-jihadist narratives and the comprehensive efforts underway to counter them. The 'Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Policy Tools, Designation and Financing' panel dived into the myriad ways in which state actors and international bodies can leverage the policies, financial practices, and legal tools available to diminish, deny and degrade the activities of terrorist organizations. We also hosted a Workshop co-hosted with the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) and the Global Research Network, which offered a series of short talks on regions of particular concern. We wrapped up our first day of discussions with a screening of *ISIS, Tomorrow. The Lost Souls of Mosul* by the brilliant journalist, Francesca Mannocchi.

We kicked off our second day with a fireside chat with His Excellency, Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs of Qatar, followed by a fireside chat with His Excellency Panos Kammenos, Minister of National Defense of Greece. During the 'Legal Considerations, Law Enforcement, and Societal Cohesion' panel, discussants debated the difficult balance between ensuring accountability and justice for crimes committed and protecting the public from further acts of terrorism. Our second panel for the day, 'Challenges to Progress: Technology and other 21st Century Stressors' focused on the ways in which technology has impacted both radicalization and terrorism. We wrapped the expert discussions with 'Collaborating Across Sectors: A Whole of Society Approach to Effective Policy Development and Creative Solutions to Manage Returnee Flows of Men, Women, and Children,' during which we explored the security risk and options of specific returnee populations. In the evening, we took a walk down our collective memory lane, told through the story of *The Looming Tower* with myself and Lawrence Wright.

In the tsunami of data that has proliferated since the emergence of ISIS, it is sometimes challenging to distinguish between the nuances. The discussions, presentations and informal talks showed us how ISIS was a symptom of a greater malady. We were nudged to think of rule of law as a solution, but also a potential factor in radicalizing when overlooked. It inspired us to consider community resilience and the relationships that governments have been developing with various communities over the years. Most importantly, it highlighted links between countering violent extremism policies implemented internationally and nationally and how we can most effectively organize to make them successful.

Last year's *Forum* convinced me that this multi-sectoral format is extremely useful in addressing the most pressing security issues, which require a whole-of-society and multi-state approach. I am excited to host our next Global Security Forum of 2019. This year, the two-day conference will explore the security challenges posed by the proliferation of modern disinformation and the serious implications this has on an increasingly interconnected world. As we prepare another exciting two-day gathering of the best and the brightest minds, I hope you will enjoy this short summary of the Forum that took place last year.

Yours,



Ali Soufan

Overview

On 30-31 October in Doha, Qatar, The Soufan Center co-hosted the *Forum on Returning Foreign Fighters* with partners Georgetown University Qatar, Qatar University, and the Qatar International Academy for Security Studies (QIASS).

The international gathering was opened by His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, and brought together a consortium of experts, practitioners, and policy-makers to address the global challenge of returning foreign fighters.

Other key speakers included His Excellency Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs of Qatar, and His Excellency Panos Kammenos, Minister of National Defense of Greece.

The *Forum* aimed to identify practical ways to implement United Nations resolutions adopted by both the Security Council and the General Assembly focused on the foreign fighter phenomenon, and to convene the foremost experts in the field to discuss related issues, including terrorist financing, prison radicalization, and strategic narrative campaigns.

Throughout the two-day conference, the concept of a “whole of society” approach to solutions which engages governments, civil society organizations, and bi- and multi-lateral institutions was emphasized.

The *Forum* convened officials and experts from over 60 countries, and included internationally recognized journalists, policy analysts, human rights experts, counter-terrorism practitioners, academics, and researchers.

There was participation by current and former representatives from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. State Department, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of the Treasury, the British Parliament, and Her Majesty's Prison Service.

Participants from prominent think-tanks, universities and NGOs included the RAND Corporation, the Brookings Institution, New America, Georgetown University, the University of Oxford, the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) in The Hague, Silatech, and the Qatar Foundation.

Impact & Reach

The Forum was live-streamed by Al Jazeera and was simultaneously translated between Arabic and English, to ensure the conversation was accessible to those in the region or watching on satellite television across the globe. Individual attendees represented numerous countries, from Mali to Malaysia, China to Canada, and everywhere in between. As we look ahead to our 2019 Forum, we are honored to share the key takeaways, policy outcomes, and impact of our inaugural 2018 Global Security Forum.

The findings of the 2018 Global Security Forum were shared at various international fora

- **United Nations Security Council:** The discussions and issues raised during the Forum contributed to the negotiations of the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee in the development of the Addendum to the Madrid Guiding Principles. The Committee and its Executive Directorate drew on their ongoing dialogue and engagement with the research community, including exchanges during the Forum on Returning Foreign Fighters.
- **United Nations:** The Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) organized a briefing “Perspectives of CTED’s Global Research Network (GRN) and the Forum on Returning FTFs in Advance of the Review of the Madrid Guiding Principles.”
- **European Parliament:** The Soufan Center was honored to participate in a roundtable discussion at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, on ‘How to Effectively Fight Terrorist Threats,’ hosted by Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Ramona Mănescu.
- **Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF):** The Soufan Center was honored to present the findings and recommendations from the 2018 Forum on Returning Foreign Fighters at the GCTF’s Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) Working Group Plenary Meeting, held in Malaga, Spain on 12 March 2019.

- **The Global Coalition Against Daesh/ISIS:** The Soufan Center was honored to present at the Global Coalition Against Daesh/ISIS Foreign Terrorist Fighters Working Group Meeting held in Ankara, Turkey, on 7 May 2019. The Soufan Center briefed on the outcomes and recommendations of the Forum on Returning Foreign Fighters, held in October 2018 in Doha, Qatar.

Findings

The Forum agreed on the need for governments, municipalities, and civilian society organizations to work closely together, not only to identify how best to address the problem of foreign fighters and returnees, but also to implement plans and programs with this objective while upholding the rule of law and observing the fundamental human rights of all.

Participants also identified a need for better data and higher quality research in support of a more developed international policy framework for dealing with returning foreign fighters. Panelists and speakers also highlighted the importance of addressing the possibility that foreign fighters may move on to exacerbate conflict elsewhere, in particular in Afghanistan, but also in other areas where sectarian and ethnic tensions exist.

Most importantly, the Forum recognized the key role that communities can play in addressing the threat of further waves of foreign fighters and in dealing with the difficulty of absorbing returnees. In this, the Forum also recognized the importance of building social cohesion and community resilience to resist the appeal of violent extremism.

Keynote Address

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar

The keynote address was provided by ***His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al- Thani***. “Terrorism cannot be confronted and eliminated unless the international community unites its efforts,” underlined ***H.E. Sheikh Mohamed***. “Strong cooperation among all states, international and regional organizations, civil society organizations and academic and research entities is essential in the exchange of intelligence, and the prevention of terrorist threats as part of the international strategy to combat terrorism,” he stressed.

PANEL I — Exploring the Threat: Regional Landscape and Global Terrorism Trends

Moderated by:

- **Richard Barrett**, CMG OBE, The Global Strategy Network

Panelists:

- **Dr. Fionulla Ni Aolain**, United Nations Special Rapporteur Protection and Promotion of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism
- **Peter Bergen**, CNN National Security Analyst and Vice President Global Studies & Fellows, New America
- **Gilles de Kerchove**, EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, European Union
- **Nick Rasmussen**, Senior Director for Counterterrorism Programs, McCain Institute for International Leadership

This session deconstructed the phenomenon of foreign fighters and returnees. The panel discussed what has transpired since the collapse of the so-called Islamic State’s Caliphate and addressed specific regional challenges, focusing on the manner in which geopolitical rivalries, internecine conflicts, humanitarian crises and refugee flows combine to impact terrorism dynamics. Specific attention was paid to the numbers and types of returning or exiting foreign fighters.

The insights from this panel included the need to address the possibility that foreign fighters who traveled to Iraq and Syria will likely go on to exacerbate

conflicts in other areas where sectarian and ethnic tensions exist, particularly Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. A large part of the discussion also centered upon the absolute necessity to balance security with human rights in dealing with foreign terrorist fighters. Dr. Fionnuala Ni Aolain reported that much of the human rights language in UN Security Council Resolutions is generic and lacks concrete specificity or enforcement -- a clear problem that needs to be resolved appropriately. Ni Aolain also suggested that in a study conducted of pathways to radicalization, a common tipping point from radical thought to violence was an abuse of laws and human rights by governments, which demonstrated how certain counter-terrorism policies and interrogation techniques, to include torture, would be highly counterproductive. Peter Bergen noted the necessity of a counter-recruitment strategy, not just a deradicalization strategy.

Gilles de Kerchove made the observation that a challenge Europe now faces is how to develop effective disengagement programs for "highly radical" individuals who have served their prison sentences and are about to be released, a confounding issue facing a number of countries, including Belgium, France, the United Kingdom and Germany. In France alone, 450 individuals classified as "highly radicalized" extremist inmates will leave prison by the end of 2019; the French government is struggling with devising effective administrative measures to keep track of all of these individuals. Nicholas Rasmussen argued that efforts to gather intelligence from social media, including Facebook and Twitter, to identify foreign fighters ultimately provided counter-terrorism specialists with a "false sense of precision" in understanding and tracking the numbers of foreign terrorist fighters.

PANEL II — Rhetoric and Radicalization: The Power of Narrative

Moderated by:

- **Lawrence Wright**, Staff Writer, The New Yorker

Panelists:

- **Linda Robinson**, Senior International & Defense Researcher, RAND Corporation
- **Colonel Sean Ryan**, U.S. Army, Spokesman, Combined Joint Task Force-Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR)
- **Irfan Saeed**, Director, Office of Countering Violent Extremism Bureau of Counterterrorism & Countering Violent Extremism (CT)
- **Dr. Tarik Yousef**, Director, Brookings Doha Center

This session explored the enduring resonance of jihadi narratives and the comprehensive efforts to counter them.

This panel was conducted under Chatham House Rule. It looked at some of the realities operating in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and how those realities impact the power of jihadi narratives. For example, Dr. Tarik Yousef remarked that Gallup polling shows that youth from the MENA region, regardless of their level of education or status of employment, have similarly dire outlooks on life and report low levels of satisfaction with their current situations. Linda Robinson referenced her recent field work in Mosul and suggested that another wave of violence could engulf Iraq in a matter of months if stabilization activities are insufficiently designed and funded; gains earned through combat operations need to be consolidated to secure peace. These observations were support and reinforced by Colonel Ryan.

Workshop Session co-hosted with the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) and the Global Research Network (GRN)

Moderator:

- Dr. David Scharia, Chief of Branch, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directive (CTED)

Speakers:

- Adrian Shtuni, CEO / Principal Consultant, Shtuni Consulting
- Jennifer Santiago Oreta, PhD, Director, Ateneo Initiative for South East Asian Studies, Philippines
- Akinola Olojo Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Transnational Threats and International Crime Programme, Institute for Security Studies, South Africa
- Ambassador Zango A. Abdu, Federal Republic of Nigeria - Dr. Bibi van Ginkel, Research Fellow, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT)

In this special workshop session, co-hosted with the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) and its Global Research Network (GRN), speakers offered a series of short talks on regions of particular concern in the returning foreign fighter phenomenon, including Southeast Asia, the Western Balkans, and Nigeria, as well as an overview of the importance and challenges associated with using battlefield evidence for prosecutions.

The speakers also addressed the importance of a human rights-based approach to these conversations, especially when considering solutions for the children who have been victims of the foreign fighter phenomenon. Scholar Adrian Shtuni noted that “children are one of the biggest issues in the Balkans. Over 200 children have travelled to Syria and Iraq from the Balkans, but then hundreds more have been born between 2012 and 2018.” Regarding Nigeria and the greater Sahel region, GRN member Akinola Olojo said that, with respect to Boko Haram and the Lake Chad Basin area, understanding local nuances, especially concerning community dynamics, is critical to developing relevant and effective policy solutions. Referring to her field research in the Philippines, GRN member Jennifer Ortea explained that foreign terrorist fighters exploit and exacerbate local tensions, transforming them into global issues.

PANEL III — Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Policy Tools, Designation, and Financing

Moderated by:

- **Colin Clarke**, Senior Research Fellow, The Soufan Center

Panelists:

- **Major General Abdul Aziz Al-Ansari**, Chairman of National Counter-Terrorism Committee, State of Qatar
- **Jason Blazakis**, Professor, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey
- **Dr. Daniel Byman**, Vice Dean and Professor, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University
- **Dr. Matt Levitt**, Former-Wexler Fellow & Director, Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism & Intelligence, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

This session addressed the myriad ways in which state actors and international bodies leverage the policies, financial practices, and legal tools currently available to diminish, deny and degrade the activities of terrorist organizations and the networks and individuals who support them. The challenges and opportunities of designating foreign terrorists and foreign terrorist organizations, enacting strict material support laws, and imposing sanctions to combat terrorism financing, were explored and discussed. The intersection between terrorist financing and organized criminal networks, including ‘small-dollar terrorism’ and the ‘crime-terror nexus,’ were also addressed.

In this panel, Dr. Daniel Byman argued that the threat from returning foreign fighters has been less dire than many initially predicted. Dr. Matthew Levitt focused on the significant involvement of many European youths in the so-called crime-terror nexus, which is linked to a lack of viable economic opportunities. An open question that was discussed among all panelists was the extent to which the Islamic State may seek to send funds from its remaining core in Iraq and Syria to its franchise and affiliate groups abroad, and how to mitigate this threat.

ISIS, Tomorrow. The Lost Souls of Mosul Dinner and Film Screening, Followed by Q&A with Francesca Mannocchi

The first day concluded with a documentary screening, **ISIS, Tomorrow. The Lost Souls of Mosul**, followed by a question and answer session with the documentary's director, **Francesca Mannocchi**, and **Bobby Ghosh** of Bloomberg. Mannocchi's documentary, based on hundreds of hours of footage she gathered, highlighted the complexity of the challenges of dealing with what happens next in Iraq. Mannocchi focused particularly on the challenges facing a generation of children traumatized by war, conflict, and violence. She contends that children were the Islamic State's most effective weapon.

Fireside Chat

His Excellency Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs, State of Qatar

With Steve Clemons, Editor at Large, The Atlantic

In the *Forum's* first fireside chat, opening the second day of the conference, **Steve Clemons**, Editor at Large, The Atlantic, interviewed **His Excellency Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah**, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs for the State of Qatar. With respect to returning foreign fighters, His Excellency remarked that the Emir of Qatar's belief is that we should "look after citizens, rehabilitate them and bring them back to society." Dr. al Attiyah further remarked, "providing education and jobs is important in addressing foreign fighters." Throughout his talk, Dr. al Attiyah highlighted Qatar's role as a mediator and facilitator in a number of ongoing conflicts including Afghanistan, and contended that Qatar will be a critical partner in helping to resolve the disastrous wars in Yemen and Syria.

Fireside Chat

His Excellency Panos Kammenos

Minister of National Defence, Greece

With New York Times, Pulitzer Prize Winner Charlie Savage

The second fireside chat featured **Charlie Savage** of the New York Times interviewing **His Excellency Panos Kammenos**, Minister of National Defence, Greece. This conversation focused on the challenge of refugees -- an issue of extreme importance globally and to Greece in particular. Minister Kammenos discussed the vulnerabilities associated with populations susceptible to radical ideologies and terrorism, stressing the need for refugees and migrant populations to be integrated into their new societies and treated with respect, as well as provided access to jobs, education, and housing.

PANEL IV — Legal Considerations, Law Enforcement, and Societal Cohesion: Striking a Balance

Moderated by:

- **Dr. Karen J. Greenberg**, Director, Center on National Security Fordham Law

Panelists:

- **Ian Acheson**, FRSA, Director of National Security Programmes, Sampson Hall
- **Dr. Joshua A. Geltzer**, Former Senior Director for Counterterrorism and Deputy Legal Advisor, National Security Council
- **Paul H. Haretel**, Deputy Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division Federal Bureau of Investigation
- **Dr. Magnus Ranstorp**, Research Director, Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies Swedish Defence University

This session explored the difficult balance between ensuring accountability and justice for crimes committed by foreign terrorist fighters, and protecting the public from further acts of violence. It also looked at societal cohesion, community resilience, and the challenges and benefits of successfully reintegrating former combatants. The responsibility of individual governments versus international bodies was debated. Particular elements of the “incarceration versus rehabilitation” debate were discussed, including prison radicalization.

There were many critical insights that flowed from this panel. Joshua Geltzer stressed the need to bring counter-terrorism within the rule of law and the tremendous push to ensure that counter-terrorism comports with international legal obligations. The incarceration versus reintegration debate was addressed, with some panelists noting the difficulty inherent in reintegrating individuals who were never truly integrated in the first place. The balance between incarceration and rehabilitation is often related to the legal frameworks of each country, with some favoring prosecution and others reintegration. Sentencing standards also vary widely across and within countries. Paul Haertel referenced the need to both enhance and share biometric data, and move toward a future where it will be more feasible to use battlefield intelligence for court prosecutions. Magnus Ranstorp noted that some countries tend to spend their time focusing on interrogation and prosecution, but prison has become an incubator for radicals. Ian Acheson commented on the need for a more comprehensive approach to prison radicalization, a globally recognized problem. Ranstorp succinctly concluded that when it comes to foreign fighters and returnees, “we cannot arrest our way out of this problem.”

PANEL V — Challenges to Progress: Technology and other 21st Century Stressors

Moderated by:

- **Steve Clemons**, Editor at Large, The Atlantic

Panelists:

- **Faisal Mohamed Al-Emadi**, Executive Director of Programs, Silatech
- **Dr. Elisabeth Kendall**, Senior Research Fellow in Arabic & Islamic Studies, Pembroke College, University of Oxford
- **Eric Rosand**, Director, The Prevention Project
- **Dr. David Scharia**, Chief of Branch, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directive (CTED)

This session addressed the ways in which both 21st century issues, like rapid urbanization, huge migration flows and technology, have impacted both radicalization and terrorism. Different aspects of the information domain were

discussed, including communications applications, cryptocurrencies, and a variety of social media platforms.

Key findings from this panel included the observation that, while both terrorism and counter-terrorism remained in the 'low-tech' realm for many decades, the last three years have seen a proliferation of emerging technologies used by both sides. Elisabeth Kendall, a scholar who frequently conduct field research on the ground in Yemen, noted that the United States conducted over 100 drone strikes in Yemen in 2017, prompting jihadists to urge their members to migrate away from the use mobile phones and social media and toward more traditional means of information sharing.

PANEL VI — Collaborating Across Sectors: A Whole of Society Approach to Effective Policy Development and Creative Solutions to Manage Returnee Flows of Men, Women, and Children

Moderated by:

- **Bobby Ghosh**, Journalist and Commentator, Bloomberg

Panelists:

- **Dr. Mia Bloom**, Professor of Communication, Georgia State University
- **Fabrizio Carboni**, Regional Director for the Near and Middle East International. Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- **Dr. Rohan Gunaratana**, Professor of Security Studies, Nanyang Technology University
- **Francesca Mannocchi**, Journalist and Director

This session deconstructed specific returnee populations, exploring their security risks and options to reintegrate them after they return home. Challenges in coordinating State responses and accepting returnees were explored, including the particular cases of women and children, and how State responses vary for those populations.

This panel highlighted several important implications of the panelists' research. The entire panel argued that individuals who were being reintegrated need to be treated with dignity and respect. Continuous engagement and follow-up interventions are crucial. Fabrizio Carboni noted that as war begins to recede, the international community needs to seize the initiative to "win the peace" before the situation can slide back into outright war and violence. He also noted that adhering to international law is complementary and mutually reinforcing with effective counter-terrorism measures. Dr. Rohan Gunaratna observed that if foreign fighters and returnees are not successfully reintegrated, there is a high likelihood that they could repeat terrorist offences, inspire others to do so, or be hailed as an icon that serves as inspiration for others over the long-term.

THE LOOMING TOWER

Screening and Discussion with Lawrence Wright and Ali Soufan

The *Forum* concluded with a screening of **The Looming Tower** and a discussion with **Lawrence Wright** and **Ali Soufan** about what led to the attacks of September 11, 2001, as well as glaring blind spots and deficiencies in U.S. national security policy that continue to plague the United States.

Conclusion

The *Forum* heard powerful testimony on the need to focus on the drivers of terrorism and find ways to protect and support vulnerable communities with programs designed to increase their resilience and cohesion. The *Forum* highlighted the need for governments and civil society organizations to work closely together, not just to identify and address the problem of foreign fighters and returnees, but also to implement plans and programs that uphold the rule of law and observe human rights.

The discussions over the course of the *Forum* identified a need for better data and higher quality research in support of a more developed international policy framework for dealing with foreign fighters and returnees. Without proper data and research, counter-terrorism responses could even exacerbate the radicalization cycles the international community is trying to avoid. There is a dire need to understand the research gaps in order to build a solid evidence base for policy interventions. Most importantly, the *Forum* recognized the key role that communities play in addressing the threat of any future waves of foreign fighters and in dealing with the difficulty of absorbing and reintegrating returnees.



GLOBAL SECURITY FORUM

ORGANIZER:

THE **SOUFAN** CENTER