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Overseas Prosecutorial
Development, Assistance, and Training

CT News and Information Updating and Connecting Our Partners in the Region

DOJ, Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance, and Training (OPDAT) in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism

In September, North Macedonia imposed financial restrictions on 15 of its nationals because of their support for ISIS. Also in September, a group of United Nations experts met to discuss terrorist exploitation of emerging technologies in the financial sector. In October, Germany repatriated 12 of its ISIS-affiliated citizens from Syria, and an American university published a study on sentencing trends and security considerations for FTFs repatriated to the Western Balkans.

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North Macedonia Blacklists 15 FTFs for Terrorism Financing, Recruitment and Propaganda

On September 19, North Macedonia imposed financial restrictions on 15 FTFs, recruiters, and funders. The restrictions severely limit the individuals' ability to use and transfer property or engage in business activities. The restrictions have been imposed indefinitely.

Specifically, North Macedonia blacklisted the following individuals:

1. Fadil Rustemi - for recruiting and funding FTF travel to Syria and for participating in ISIS activities in 2015-2016;
2. Azem Latifi - for financing FTF travel to Syria and for hiding the perpetrators of terrorism offenses;
3. Amir Ismaili - for participating in ISIS activities;
4. Orhan Ramadani - for participating in ISIS activities and spreading terrorism propaganda on social media;
5. Orhan Derala - for membership in ISIS, recruiting FTFs from North Macedonia, and propagating ISIS propaganda on social media;
6. Fitim Ramadani - for membership in ISIS and spreading ISIS propaganda on social media;
7. Besim Shaqiri - for participating in ISIS activities;
8. Sadula Zhupani - for membership in ISIS and spreading ISIS propaganda;
9. Elmir Avmedoski - for membership in ISIS and spreading ISIS propaganda;
10. Emir Iseni - for membership in ISIS and spreading ISIS propaganda;
11. Jetmir Ismaili - for membership in ISIS and spreading ISIS propaganda;
12. Adem Kamberi - for participating in ISIS activities;
13. Nusret Ametov - for participating in ISIS activities;
14. Abdurrahman Belja - for participating in ISIS activities; and
15. Sulejman Idrizi - for participating in ISIS activities.

Source: Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia

Germany Repatriates 12 Citizens from the Roj Camp in Syria

In October, Germany repatriated 12 ISIS-affiliated citizens from the Roj camp in northeastern Syria. The group of returnees included four women, seven children and a young man who had been taken to Syria when he was 11 years old. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock stated that, with this and past repatriations, Germany has now brought back almost all its citizens who were detained in Syrian camps. Yet, a few women remain there, having refused to return to Germany. Upon arrival to Germany, the five repatriated adults were detained and, according to Minister Baerbock, they will have to “answer for their alleged actions” before the German judiciary.

To date, Germany has conducted six repatriation operations and brought back a total of 26 women and 76 children from the Syrian camps. A majority of the repatriated women have been prosecuted and convicted by German courts for terrorism-related crimes, as well as for other criminal offenses based on national and international law.

Sources: [Germany repatriates 12 IS-linked citizens from Syria](#)
[Germany Repatriates 12 Citizens From Syrian Jihadist Camp](#)

UN Experts Warn of New Threats in Terrorist Financing

Terrorists have been using the internet, social media, and technology for at least 20 years to further their aims – including to spread propaganda, recruit new members, and radicalize future attackers. Now, experts gathered by the United Nations warn that terrorists are misusing new and emerging technology to exploit the financial services sector, complicating the fight against terrorist financing.

In September, more than 20 experts met to discuss how terrorists exploit new and emerging technologies. These

meetings were led by the United Nations' Counterterrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), bringing together experts from international and regional organizations, national authorities, civil society, academia, and the private sector.

During the CTED-led meetings, the experts focused on two main ideas. They identified global and regional trends in how terrorists exploit new payment technologies and fundraising methods. They also explored how new technologies might improve efforts to combat terrorist financing.

Emerging technologies can be used to solicit donations for terrorist organizations, sell online merchandise with profits going to terrorist networks, and crowdfund for groups that pose as charities or humanitarian organizations but are actually fronts for terrorist groups. To support these activities, terrorists are using mobile payment systems and cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin. The CTED warns that implementing AML/CFT measures is becoming more challenging due to the rise in decentralized finance (DeFi), nonfungible tokens (NFT), and unhosted cryptocurrency wallets.

To address this threat, states must adopt appropriate financial regulations that cover these activities. In addition, law enforcement, prosecutors and judges must educate themselves about these new trends. They must have a sufficient understanding of new technologies that they are able to effectively identify and disrupt criminal activity in this sector.

The CTED-led experts advise that government officials should establish robust public-private partnerships, including “dialogue between financial intelligence units and the relevant financial technology (FinTech) sector with regards to ... suspicious activity reporting.”

While new technologies create risks, they also have the potential to make AML/CFT measures “faster, cheaper, and more effective.” To realize that potential, government officials must take the initiative and harness the power of emerging financial technologies.

Source: [CTED’s tech sessions: Highlights on “Threats and opportunities related to new payment technologies and fundraising methods” | Security Council - Counter-Terrorism Committee \(CTC\)](#)

GWU Reports on Repatriated FTFs in the Western Balkans

In September, George Washington University’s Program on Extremism published a report analyzing repatriations of male foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, and North Macedonia. The report discusses trends in prosecuting and sentencing FTFs in these countries, as well as challenges and policy considerations for addressing security risks associated with repatriated FTFs, both within the correctional system and following the FTFs’ release from prison.

According to the report, between August 2018 and June 2022 these three Western Balkan countries repatriated a total of 31 ISIS-affiliated males previously detained by Kurdish forces in Syria. At least 24 of them have been successfully prosecuted under laws that criminalize joining terrorist organizations and traveling abroad for terrorism purposes.

North Macedonia, which was the first European country to publicly transfer FTFs from Syria, repatriated 11 adult male FTFs. According to the report, at least seven of them were convicted by North Macedonian courts, and the rest are under indictment. Sentences imposed in these cases ranged from six years to nine years, with an average sentence of 6.4 years.

Kosovo repatriated 12 FTFs. According to the report, at least 10 of them have been convicted and two are under investigation. Convicted FTFs in Kosovo were sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to six years, with an average sentence of four years. BiH repatriated eight FTFs, all of whom have been prosecuted and convicted. The sentences in these cases ranged from one to six years, with an average prison sentence of 3.4 years.

The report observes that prison sentences imposed on the convicted FTFs in these three Western Balkan countries are notably lower than sentences handed down for similar offenses in the countries of the European Union or in the United States, where the average prison sentence has been 9 and 13.1 years, respectively. However, it is also noted that

sentences for repatriated FTFs have been, on the whole, lengthier than sentences handed down for other ISIS-related activities.

Sentences in BiH and Kosovo continue to border on the statutory minimums. The report finds this leniency to be unusual considering that repatriated FTFs fought with ISIS for a much longer time and thus demonstrated “more robust commitment to the organization’s cause” than other individuals who returned voluntarily in earlier years. Furthermore, they often traveled to Syria “with premeditation and as part of a group of likeminded individuals, or in coordination with jihadist networks operating between the Western Balkans and Syria,” which is another indicator of their determination and intent. In this regard, the report opines that the authorities should reevaluate and adjust sentencing ranges before additional repatriations take place in the future.

According to the report, imprisoned FTFs pose a high risk for prison security, despite their small numbers, because of their ties with terrorist networks and their battlefield experience. Therefore, countries should invest more resources in developing evidence-based risk assessment tools and an effective risk management strategy to prevent in-prison radicalization and the recruitment of other inmates. Given that the majority of FTFs will be released from prison between 2023 and 2025, the report advises that the authorities should “boost prison-based disengagement and rehabilitation efforts, and implement additional risk assessment and management tools in preparation for their re-entry into society.”

Source: [A. Shtuni The Western Balkans: Repatriated Foreign Terrorist Fighters, Sentencing Trends, and Security Considerations](#)