

Summary of proceedings



Preventing radicalisation in prisons

Developing a coordinated and effective approach

(International expert roundtable, December 2015, Amman, Jordan)

Contents

Foreword	
Preventing radicalisation in prisons: global challenges and PRI initiatives	1
Introduction	2
Key definitions	2
Emerging themes from discussion	3
Scope of the problem	3
Drivers for radicalisation in (and outside of) prison	3
Dispersal or concentration?	3
Classification of prisoners and assessing risk	4
Rehabilitation and reintegration	4
Role of prison employees	6
Women and radicalisation	7
Children and radicalisation	8
Final outcomes and recommendations for future action	10
Further reading	11

Foreword

Preventing radicalisation in prisons: global challenges and PRI initiatives

PRI has been aware for some time now that prisons can play a critical role in both triggering and reinforcing the radicalisation process. The problem is widespread, and has increasingly engaged PRI's attention over the last couple of years as a result of interactions with partners and stakeholders in Europe, Africa and South Asia, as well as through the requests made to PRI's Head Office in London and regional offices in Amman (covering the Middle East and North Africa) and Astana (covering Central Asia).

The issue was first examined in some depth through a blog entitled, 'Radicalisation and de-radicalisation in prison – what should we do with violent extremist offenders?',¹ written by Dr Shane Bryans for PRI, and published on our website on 25 June 2014.

PRI followed this up by actively participating in discussions initiated by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on the topic of radicalisation, including contributing to the drafting process for the UNODC *Handbook on Radicalisation*² and attending a meeting in Rome in March 2015, which discussed the treatment of prisoners convicted of terrorist offences from Europe, Africa and the Middle East. PRI also attended the 13th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Doha in April 2015 and documented the efforts of the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the United Kingdom's National Offender Management Service in developing and implementing effective intervention models on this issue.

1. <http://www.penalreform.org/blog/radicalisation-deradicalisation-prison-violent-extremist-offenders/> <accessed 14 April 2016>.

2. Unpublished at the time of writing.

PRI further attended a conference hosted by EuroPris on 8 June 2015 where the work being done on radicalisation in prisons in a number of European countries was extensively discussed. Particular highlights from this conference included an outline of the research conducted on behalf of EUROPRIS by the Belgian Prison Service, which looked at the experiences of 15 jurisdictions in Europe.

It was against this background that PRI decided to organise the international roundtable entitled 'Preventing Radicalisation in Prisons: Developing a Coordinated and Effective Approach' hosted by PRI's Middle East and North Africa Regional Office in Amman on 2-3 December 2015, which forms the subject of this report. The roundtable brought together a total of 30 participants from 15 countries representing the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Central and South Asia.

It is clear from the work done by PRI so far that the biggest challenge in addressing the problem of radicalisation inside prisons is applying a human rights-based approach to meeting security and safety concerns; and that there is a real need to build strategies based on respect for human rights and compliance with international standards. PRI's strategy going forward during 2016-17 includes the following key elements:

- further development of international and regional standards and guidance for addressing the issue of radicalised and violent extremist prisoners to supplement what is currently available in the *Rome Memorandum* and the Council of Europe *Guidelines*;
- development of tools and in particular classification methods and also training modules to build capacity of prison personnel working with radicalised and violent extremist prisoners;
- documenting, promoting and developing effective intervention models which combine aspects of education, counselling, and rehabilitation measures;
- exchanging experiences from different jurisdictions with regards to working with radicalised and violent extremist prisoners and looking specifically at the needs of women and children which has not had adequate attention to date;
- advocating for improvements to overall prison conditions, by addressing issues of overcrowding, large numbers of pre-trial detainees, lack of infrastructure and limited resources for rehabilitation, all of which fuel the growth of radicalisation inside prisons.

Nikhil Roy, Director of Programme Development, Penal Reform International, January 2016.

Introduction

The number of prisoners in prison for violent extremist and terrorist offences is believed to be increasing globally.³ There is concern that such prisoners may spread extremist ideologies among the prison population and a fear that radicalised detainees will engage in extremist activities on release. The treatment of these prisoners is a defining issue for prison services who must fulfil human rights obligations, ensure their rehabilitation and reintegration, and maintain the safety and security of all prisoners in their care.

The multi-faceted role that prison services, civil society and government can play in identifying and preventing radicalisation in prison is hugely important and yet to date little research has been done. In order to generate discussion and to share international and regional experiences, Penal Reform International (PRI) held a roundtable on preventing radicalisation in prisons in Amman, Jordan on 2 and 3 December 2015. This two day roundtable was attended by over 30 representatives from prison authorities, ministries, embassies, Inter-Governmental Organisations, national and international Non-Governmental Organisations and research institutes. Participants came from India, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Tanzania, Tunisia, the United Kingdom and Yemen.

The following is a summary of proceedings setting out some of the key issues that emerged during the wide-ranging discussion, looking at some of the international practice that was shared during the meeting and concluding with some practical recommendations for future action.

“ We need to focus on security but also on the treatment and rehabilitation of radicals... We need to experiment and act as this is a risk threatening all of us. ”

Participant, Jordan.

Key definitions

There is no internationally recognised definition of what radicalisation and violent extremism means but the Council of Europe has recently developed *Guidelines for Prison and Probation Services Regarding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism* which sets out the following definitions:⁴

3. According to Angell and Gunaratna, there are over 100,000 convicted and suspected terrorists in detention in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, *Terrorist Rehabilitation: The US Experience in Iraq*, CRC Press, 2011.

4. Council of Europe, *Guidelines for Prison and Probation Services regarding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism*, 2015.

Radicalisation:

'a dynamic process whereby an individual increasingly accepts and supports violent extremism. The reasons behind this process can be ideological, political, religious, social, economic or personal'.

Violent extremism:

'promoting, supporting or committing acts which may lead to terrorism and which are aimed at defending an ideology advocating racial, national, ethnic or religious supremacy and opposing the core democratic principles and values'.

The commentary to the *Guidelines* stresses that they are not concerned with the adoption of radical political opinions, but with the undemocratic adoption, promotion and support of violent means to obtain demands.

Emerging themes from discussion

Scope of the problem

There are many prisoners worldwide who are convicted of or awaiting trial for violent extremist or terrorist offences. Exact data on this issue is not readily available and the problem of hard data is further complicated by differing definitions of such crimes from country to country. There was agreement around the table that much more research is needed to properly assess the scope of the problem.

Drivers for radicalisation in (and outside of) prison

Although research has not found that there is a direct causal link between socio-economic disadvantage and radicalisation,⁵ participants commented that prisoners in many countries often come from poor and marginalised backgrounds and have low levels of education and that this can exacerbate the risk of radicalisation whilst in prison. It was also commented that the terrorist group ISIS⁶ recruit prisoners to violent extremism through promoting the idea that this will help to compensate or atone for their offending and the harm they may have done to their family.

“ An inclusive, human rights-based approach is needed so that prisoners are not alienated even more. ”

Participant, Tunisia.

Poor conditions in prisons, including overcrowding and lack of access to adequate health care as well as long periods of time in pre-trial detention, can create a context in which radicalisation can flourish and where implementation of prevention programmes is very difficult to accomplish. The way in which security forces deal with the investigation stage of proceedings can also be a driver for radicalisation and reinforce a sense of grievance and victimhood. In Nigeria, for example, courts are so congested that spending five to ten years in pre-trial detention is not unusual and antiquated colonial era infrastructure makes classification and rehabilitation very challenging. There is evidence that the terrorist group, Boko Haram, has radicalised and recruited members through prisons.

In Europe, research⁷ has found that motivations for radicalisation both in and outside of prisons include a sense of marginalisation from society, lack of a clear identity, events in Syria, mental illness, and being a social misfit. The neurology of young people can also encourage risk taking. It is important to stress that very few people actually go on to commit violent extremist acts even though they may be radicalised.

“ We must meet terrorism with democratic openness. ”

Participant, Norway.

Dispersal or concentration?

Discussion centred on whether to disperse prisoners deemed to be at risk of radicalising other prisoners within the general prison population or to hold them separately in concentrated units. Several participants from prison authorities emphasised that holding prisoners in isolation from others was damaging to physical and psychological health and well-being and likely to prevent rehabilitation.

The experience in Europe on this question is varied. Historically, both Ireland and Germany had concentration models for extremist republican and left-wing offenders in the 1970s and 1980s, which generated problems of societal unrest and intensified extremist violence. Currently most countries in Europe have a policy of dispersing terrorists among a small number of high-security prisons, although in the Netherlands there are three concentrated units holding terrorist offenders. There was consensus that the optimal approach will vary from individual case to individual case: for example, a prisoner recently returned from Syria may in fact be disillusioned and not present a risk to other inmates in terms of radicalisation so it may be appropriate for him or her to be integrated with other inmates.

5. See Jitka Maleckova, 'Impoverished terrorists: stereotype or reality?' in Tore Bjørge (ed.), *Root Causes of Terrorism. Myths, reality and ways forward* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp33-42, who concludes that 'neither the participants nor the adherents of militant activities... are recruited predominantly from the poor... [and] poverty on a national level does not predict the number of terrorist attacks carried out by individuals coming from a country'.

6. The organisation is also known as ISIL or Daesh.

7. See, for example, Silke A (ed.), *Prisons, terrorism and extremism: Critical issues in management, radicalisation and reform*, Routledge, 2014.

A very practical issue is that in many prisons in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), prisoners live and sleep in dormitories holding up to 80 or 100 prisoners at a time. There are very few cell-based alternatives in which prisoners who are assessed to be a risk of radicalising other prisoners can be held separately from the main prison population. In Tunisia, there is a real problem with the lack of classification of prisoners, and lack of separation of pre-trial and convicted prisoners. Morocco historically concentrated terrorist prisoners but they are now dispersed across half of the prison estate, in part to enable closer relationships with families. The exception to this approach of integration is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which has five prisons dedicated for terrorist offenders.

Classification of prisoners and assessing risk

A risk assessment process on admission is essential and can be the foundation for important decisions about security classification, allocation to different facilities and separating individual prisoners from the general prison population in order to prevent radicalisation. It is also vital as a means to gather information about suitable rehabilitation interventions. In general, the consensus amongst participants was that existing tools are not sufficient and extremist prisoners require specialised or at least additional tests to determine the risk of future violence.

Two risk assessment tools used in Europe and elsewhere for extremist prisoners were discussed: the Extremist Risk Guidance 22+ (ERG22+), developed by the British National Offender Management Service which assesses offenders on 22 cognitive and behavioural factors theoretically associated with extremism; and the Violent Extremism Risk Assessment protocol (VERA 2) developed by D E Pressman and J Flockton for use with prisoners convicted of extremist violence or terrorist

offences, which is used in the Netherlands (as well as other countries such as Australia), and which the authors themselves acknowledge is not a 'silver bullet for prediction'. Participants commented that such tools need to be put into specific country contexts, particularly in terms of new forms of religious ideology. It was also noted that gender differences were not properly addressed in VERA 2 and that the tool did not assess the willingness or otherwise of prisoners to be part of a rehabilitative intervention.

Information about the application of VERA 2 was shared with participants by the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), a Europe-wide umbrella of practitioners involved in countering violent radicalisation. VERA 2 allows for a baseline to be developed and then for further assessments to be conducted at different stages. It is intended to be used by a wide variety of different professionals including psychologists, prosecutors and prison officials, but all of them will require extensive training in using the tool appropriately and effectively. It is not a stand-alone test but designed to be used in conjunction with a wide range of other information about the prisoner.

Rehabilitation and reintegration

Policymakers have to decide whether extremist offenders should be subject to regular rehabilitation and reintegration interventions or whether new programmes are needed that are specifically tailored to their unique needs and challenges. These could include religious counselling and support with stigmatisation arising from being classified as a terrorist offender. A wide variety of different rehabilitation measures were discussed during the roundtable, including counselling, dialogue, religious teaching and disengagement. It was acknowledged that the knowledge base about the nature and impact of such efforts remains relatively weak.

Rome Memorandum

Good Practice Number 3: An important first step can be developing an effective intake, assessment & classification system for new inmates.

The important first steps in correctional management begin when a new inmate enters the prison facility. Target populations of rehabilitation programs could thus be narrowly and unambiguously defined according to set criteria. Knowing as much as possible about the inmate's personal background, criminal history, personality traits, ideology and behaviour in prison is important for making sound classification decisions and in designing effective individual rehabilitation programs.

Good Practice Number 2: Good prison standards and practices can offer an appropriate starting point for building an effective, safe and smoothly operating rehabilitation program.

Counter-extremism and rehabilitation programs have the best chance of succeeding when they are nested in a safe, secure, adequately resourced, and well operated custodial setting where the human rights of prisoners are respected.

Source: Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders, Global Counterterrorism Forum, 7-8 June 2012

Summary of scored areas for VERA 2 according to whether the risk is low, moderate or high

Belief and attitudes: attachment to ideology justifying violence; victim of personal or group injustice and grievances; dehumanisation of identified targets of injustice; rejection of democratic pluralistic society and values; feelings of hate, frustration, persecution and/or alienation; hostility to national collective identity/identity conflict; lack of understanding or empathy for those outside own group.

Context and intent: seeker, consumer, developer of violent extremist materials; identification of target (person, place, group) in response to perceived injustice; active personal contact with violent extremists; anger and expressed intent to act violently; expressed desire to die for cause or martyrdom; expressed intent to plan, prepare violent action; susceptible to influence, authority, indoctrination.

History and capability: early exposure to pro-violence militant ideology; network of family, friends involved in violent action; prior criminal history of violence; tactical, paramilitary, explosives training; extremist ideological training; access to funds, resources, organizational skills.

Commitment and motivation: driven by perceived noble cause/glorification of violent action/ religious obligation; driven by opportunism, excitement, adventure; driven by comradeship, group belonging, status in group, social needs; driven by moral imperative, moral superiority, identity; driven by excitement, adventure.

Protective items: re-interpretation of ideology less rigid, absolute; rejection of violence to obtain goals; change of vision of enemy; involvement with offence-related programs; community support for non-violence; family support for non-violence.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

Representatives from KSA presented their approach to rehabilitating and reintegrating violent extremist prisoners. This work began in KSA in 2005. Once radicalised prisoners have concluded their sentences they are placed in a separate centre akin to a village and here they are referred to as beneficiaries (the programme is not for pre-trial detainees nor for prisoners serving their sentence). A concerted effort is made to persuade them to live a normal life on release and to 'win their hearts and minds'. As of 2015, around 3,000 people have gone through the process.

“ Ideology is not defeated by authority and power. It is defeated by alternative ideology and good arguments. ”

Participant, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The beneficiaries are exposed to a very broad range of classroom and extracurricular programmes such as religious instruction, history, politics, self-development, sport, art therapy and psychological counselling including positive thinking (particularly popular with younger beneficiaries). They work with centre employees but also external people, including doctors, influential clerics, academics, psychiatrists and psychologists.

In some cases, beneficiaries have been serving very long sentences and need help to prepare them for social changes that have taken place during their sentence.

A great deal of emphasis is placed upon religious programmes to correct concepts of *jihad*⁸ and *takfir*⁹ which, the representative explained, are both areas where there is a great deal of confusion relating to treatment of non-Muslims. A recent innovation has been the introduction of history classes challenging a view that violence has effected positive change in the past and introducing them to ideas about Islam spreading through peace (for example in Indonesia). They are also shown that engaging in international organisations and making political treaties with non-Muslims is not wrong. The many contradictions of ISIS are carefully pointed out.

Another important strand to reintegration is the focus on building family and social relationships. Families are permitted to visit the centres which has an important effect in terms of preventing further radicalisation within families.

There is explicit recognition that beneficiaries can acquire enhanced social status fighting with terrorist groups in Syria: they may be leaders, have two wives and have *fatwa* decision-making experience, which is very different from their experience living with no or little status in KSA.

8. There is no agreed definition for the term *jihad* but here it is used to refer to an external physical struggle against non-Muslims.

9. Again there is no agreed definition of *takfir* but it is used in this context to refer to the practice of accusing other Muslims, as well as non-Muslims, of impurity.

The objective is for beneficiaries to abandon violence, not to become secular or liberal. If they abandon violence, for example, then this can enable life without extremism to resume so they can get married and have a job.

After release, there is an extensive follow-up programme and contact with the beneficiary and his or her family that includes financial support for a limited time and training and education. The programme cannot guarantee a job but does try to provide one and actively encourages marriage as this is seen to have a protective effect.

In order to implement this programme it is vital to have high-quality practitioners and high levels of resources. There has also been a focus on international cooperation and sharing of this experience to help others in the field to build their capacity. The recidivism rate is estimated to be 12 per cent.

“ Rehabilitation is a cost-effective investment. ”

Participant, Jordan.

Morocco

The representative from Morocco cautioned against exaggerating the spread of radicalised ideology so that the problems looks bigger than it is, but also noted that it is expanding in prisons. Morocco's approach is based upon identifying the socio-cultural causes of violent extremism and seeking to address them. The root causes are complex but include corruption, nepotism and a crisis of belonging felt in many Arab societies.

The response is founded upon viewing inmates first of all as citizens and in reconstructing their sense of citizenship and of societal responsibility. Their reintegration is seen as the responsibility of all in society and in Morocco the prison authorities talk of 'accompanying' them rather than 'helping' them on their release. Specifically the approach includes:

- the teaching of Islam as an antidote to extremism; representatives from the Ministry of Islamic Affairs make thousands of visits to Moroccan prisons each year;
- constant training and building capacity of prison staff;
- introducing new legislation for alternatives to imprisonment;
- education and job training for prisoners, including partnering with private companies.

Europe

Information was shared about the experience in Europe of rehabilitation and reintegration. There is a distinction between de-radicalisation programmes (implying a profound shift in mind-set) which are used in Germany,

and disengagement programmes, used in Sweden, where the focus is more on changing behaviour to prevent future acts of violence. The latter approach has the advantage of being able to be measured. Furthermore, there is some evidence that once someone is disengaged from extremism, they are more able to engage in the 'normal' world and obtain a job and build a family, for instance.

In the United Kingdom, there is an acknowledgement that front line practitioners such as police or social workers often do not have the trust or credibility needed for working with violent extremists, and therefore a mentoring system has been developed whereby members of the diaspora come into prisons and encourage prisoners to disengage. For these programmes to work it is vital that the prison is a safe environment where there is a good relationship between staff and prisoners. It is also very important that different agencies – police, prison, probation, social and health care – meet and share information about prisoners. Comprehensive reintegration programmes are multifaceted and require intense collaboration and information sharing between all stakeholders.

India

In India too, terrorists have been given a stipend at the end of their sentence, as well as vocational training and support for their families. In Jammu and Kashmir, community leaders often conduct prison visits to engage with violent extremist prisoners.

Role of prison employees

An issue that was discussed throughout the roundtable was the recruitment and training of staff to ensure they are carefully selected and trained in recognising signs of radicalisation, as well as able to secure their own safety and the safety of prisoners. It was noted that in India there had been difficulties with staff themselves being recruited by terrorist groups as 'couriers', acting either under duress or as a result of incentives.

“ All prison staff should be philosophers. ”

Participant, Tanzania.

The Council of Europe *Guidelines for Prison and Probation Services Regarding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism* present the concept of dynamic security which is defined as: 'a working method by which staff prioritise the creation and maintenance of everyday communication and interaction with prisoners based on high professional ethics. It aims at better understanding prisoners and assessing the risks they may pose as well as ensuring safety, security and good order, contributing to rehabilitation and preparation for release'.

Rome Memorandum

Good Practice Number 5: Ensure, as appropriate, that all relevant staff are professionally trained and educated to deal with the complexities of reintegration or rehabilitation efforts.

Prison and other officials who are professionally involved with violent extremist offenders could be appropriately trained and educated to understand and deal with the complexities of reintegration and rehabilitation efforts. Prison staff and professionals involved in rehabilitation programs could be trained to distinguish signs of radicalization, communicate in a way that is constructive and avoids conflict, and respond appropriately to a potential extremist threat.

Source: Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders, Global Counterterrorism Forum, 7-8 June 2012

International training modules for prison staff on the issue of prevention of radicalisation are currently being developed by a number of international bodies, including the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in the Hague, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Global Centre on Cooperative Security.

Women and radicalisation

A representative from PRI gave a presentation on the role of women in radical and extremist organisations which covered a wide number of issues set out below.

There is clear participation of women in the terrorist group, ISIS, in many different guises, including recruiting others, marriage and violent acts including suicide attacks; an estimated 40 per cent of ISIS is female. The paradox is that women are not allowed to work or seek education in these organisations.

Very little research has been done on their motivations for engaging with ISIS, and the following suggestions are based upon anecdotal evidence:

- as a response to violence she has witnessed; extremist entities provide safe havens for women;
- exclusion from public life of women, both economic and political;
- to gain self-esteem and a sense of accomplishment by taking on roles that are not conventional but are challenging societal gender norms;
- ignorance of issues of religion due to the limited number of women who present moderate religious thinking. Many women accept false interpretation of religious texts since they have limited sources of alternatives. Extremists fill this vacuum and thereby achieve influence;
- influence of male family members, particularly if there is a limited platform for women outside of the family; the main recruiters are husbands, brothers and fathers;

- extensive influence of social media since it is open source;
- wide availability of TV channels with extremist preachers targeting women.

The representative outlined the following forms of participation in extremism amongst women:

- raising awareness amongst other women – in conservative societies women are often very close to each other (see below);
- raising money to fund extremist actions;
- investigation and interrogation in conflict zones;
- suicide attacks;
- so-called sexual jihad marriage (where women are compelled to travel to marry) which receives media attention;
- encouraging other members of the family to join ISIS.

The means of extremism used by women are not different from those used by men, but it can be harder to monitor or oversee extremist women since they often operate in closed circles with very limited contact with the external world. Limited external contact may include, for example, choosing to educate their children at home and not in mainstream schooling.

If a woman has been convicted of an extremist offence, it can be very challenging to rehabilitate and reintegrate her owing to the stigma she is likely to face from her family and community and the risk of revenge. There are very few rehabilitation programmes specifically for women. Classification is also an issue as women are held in mixed dormitories in some countries, with little classification. The UN Bangkok Rules¹⁰ are silent on the question of female extremist prisoners and there is a need for specific guidance.

There is a need for women to participate in the design of rehabilitation programmes in prisons and generally for more women scholars to study moderate Islam.

10. The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Female Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the 'Bangkok Rules') were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2010.

During the discussion following the presentation, it was remarked that:

- There is very little experience in Europe of women as violent extremist prisoners and this is an area where more focus is needed. The gender-specific treatment of women engaged in violent extremism is not referred to in the Council of Europe *Guidelines* (nor in the *Rome Memorandum*).
- It is important to be aware that women may be pressured into offending by male family members and that a defence of duress or self-defence should be available to them, ie. are they victims or offenders?
- For those women who were compelled to travel to marry (so-called sexual jihad), it is very important to understand that they are victims of sexual violence who are in need of psychological treatment, otherwise the trauma may lead to increased extremism and suicide attacks. They are often young girls and it can be harder to address their needs as radicalised adults unless there are gender-sensitive interventions.
- In KSA there are very low numbers of radicalised women – they are held in women-only prisons staffed by female prison employees. Although the sample is too small for statistical analysis, nearly all were influenced by their families.
- In Europe too, the numbers are very low – so low that they would most likely be in isolation if held separately. However, this is seen as a growing issue and it is interesting that they are active in different ways to men. This is on the agenda for the Radicalisation Awareness Network for 2016.

Children and radicalisation

A representative from PRI made the following observations.

Whether we are talking about children who arrive already radicalised in prison or whether they are particularly vulnerable to radicalisation whilst in prison, the focus of the treatment they receive whilst in prison must be on rehabilitation not punishment.

Children who are arrested for ordinary offences, for example theft and crimes associated with survival, might be vulnerable to radicalisation in prison.

- It is hard to underestimate how frightening the experience of detention can be for children however much bravado they may show. Associating with groups or strong individuals can be an opportunistic attempt to find security and safety. Given that this is opportunistic, it is also possible that such relationships finish when they no longer serve their purpose, ie. when the child leaves detention.

- Children in some jurisdictions are still routinely held in detention alongside adults, which carries a multitude of risks, including the risk of radicalisation. Separation from adults is an essential human rights standard and from it flows the importance of adequate birth registration and documentation.
- Because of their stage of development, the negative effects of being separated from family, friends, education and a normal social environment are very acute for children.

However, the risk of radicalisation should not be overstated and normal feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and fear on arrival in prison should not be viewed through the prism of radicalisation risk. Assessments must be nuanced and avoid over-simplification.

“ Children are still being constructed and are easier to influence – they need rehabilitation. ”

Participant, Jordan.

What about children arrested for terrorist or politically motivated offences?

- Terrorist activity and political unrest can put huge stress on juvenile justice systems: children may be seen as easy targets for arrest and intelligence by security forces; or they may be tried in adult or military courts and deprived of crucial safeguards such as their right to a lawyer. But if normal safeguards protecting the rights of children in conflict with the law crumble in the face of terrorist activity and/or are put to one side in the name of national security, then we have to ask if this serves to create additional grievance and alienation amongst children and young people and is in fact counter-productive.
- Even if a state of emergency has been declared, it is not possible to derogate from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and so all exceptional legal regimes responding to terrorism need to have explicit provisions regarding the treatment of under-18s which must comply with the Convention.
- One participant noted that children are capable of committing truly horrendous crimes and should be held accountable, but that this must be within the context of their capacity for rehabilitation. For example, international standards are clear that children cannot be subject to the death penalty or to a life sentence without the prospect of parole. Sentencing procedures must be individualised and proportionate both to the nature of the offence and to the child's background and characteristics.

What sort of preventing and combating measures might be beneficial for children?

Children are exceptionally capable of rehabilitation. We use this term a great deal and it can mean different things, but some of its facets include: building constructive trust based relationships with staff; and developing a sense of optimism about the child's future upon release through developing education, training and employment and connections with family and friends (as long as this is in the child's best interests). Furthermore, there is likely to be a strong rehabilitative effect in maintaining contact with other children which suggests that segregation may not be beneficial. Decisions on segregation should be made based upon risk analysis.

“ Young offenders may be particularly vulnerable to radicalisation. In order to avoid the negative effects of imprisonment, sanctions and measures in the community shall be considered first. Additional efforts and resources shall be allocated for working with these offenders. ”

Source: The Council of Europe's *Guidelines for Prison and Probation Services regarding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism*.

During the discussion participants noted that:

- Rehabilitation of children needs a long timeframe. While a focus on sports is often the default option, it is not sufficient. A focus on arts, theatre and music is also needed.
- The experience in Morocco was that radicals target the most intelligent children and groom them to become future leaders.
- UNICEF has emphasised the importance of diversion and pointed out that five countries in the region (Jordan, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt) had national plans of action for diversion in place. Such diversion is not a soft option even for serious offences and it is challenging to compensate both the victim and the community.

Final outcomes and recommendations for future action

Participants concluded the roundtable by agreeing to the following action points.

01 An approach to preventing radicalisation that focuses on security alone is not sufficient. Any approach must be grounded in international human rights law and standards, the rule of law, democracy and justice.

02 More research is needed to analyse and determine the magnitude and scope of radicalisation in prisons worldwide, as well as documentation and promotion of good practice models.

03 Counter radicalisation and violent extremist programmes should be part of an overall prison reform plan that includes: ensuring that good prison management standards and practices are in place; proper filing and classification systems; improving prison conditions and services, including infrastructure and living conditions; and efficient and comprehensive rehabilitation programmes for prisoners.

04 Prison reform should not be dealt with in isolation. A coherent and comprehensive criminal justice reform strategy that reflects the complexity of the justice system and the interconnected nature and relations between the different institutions and actors of the system should be developed. Justice reform should ensure that detainees are not held in pre-trial detention for long periods of time, and the adoption of alternatives to imprisonment as a tool for reducing prison overcrowding should be adopted.

05 All governmental entities engaged in preventing violent extremism should cooperate closely together (including, for example, the police, judiciary, prosecution, prisons, intelligence agencies and health services).

06 International collaboration and exchange of experiences are a necessity given that violent extremist crimes transcend borders.

07 Prison staff must be carefully selected and trained to be able to recognise signs of radicalisation, understand and respond to the complexities of reintegration and rehabilitation measures, as well as to secure their own safety and the safety of inmates.

08 Relevant tools must be developed to aid assessment and classification of prisoners. These should take into account the capacity and the available resources of the penitentiary system and respond to the local context and the size of the problem.

09 Training and teaching curricula on human rights-based approaches to address the treatment of this group of prisoners must be developed for teaching in prison academies and training centres.

10 Gender-sensitive rehabilitation and reintegration programmes should be developed that take into account the history behind women's involvement in violent extremist acts, including personal experiences, such as if they have been subject to sexual or other abuse.

11 Child-friendly programmes for children who might be recruited whilst in detention or who are already radicalised should be developed. These programmes must focus on rehabilitating and protecting children from exploitation. Additionally, programmes should take into account children accompanying their mothers in detention, and children who are born as a result of rape by violent extremist groups.

12 Post-release after-care programmes should be developed to respond to the specific characteristics of this group of prisoners, with the aim of reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

13 Civil society should work closely with regional mechanisms such as the African Union and the Arab League to help develop standards further in this area.

Further reading

Guidance on policy

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