

Press Releases: Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government's Planned Referendum

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 20, 2017

The United States strongly opposes the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government's referendum on independence, planned for September 25. All of Iraq's neighbors, and virtually the entire international community, also oppose this referendum. The United States urges Iraqi Kurdish leaders to accept the alternative, which is a serious and sustained dialogue with the central government, facilitated by the United States and United Nations, and other partners, on all matters of concern, including the future of the Baghdad-Erbil relationship.

If this referendum is conducted, it is highly unlikely that there will be negotiations with Baghdad, and the above international offer of support for negotiations will be foreclosed.

The costs of proceeding with the referendum are high for all Iraqis, including Kurds. Already the referendum has negatively affected Defeat-ISIS coordination to dislodge ISIS from its remaining areas of control in Iraq. The decision to hold the referendum in disputed areas is especially destabilizing, raising tensions which ISIS and other extremist groups are now seeking to exploit. The status of disputed areas and their boundaries must be resolved through dialogue, in accordance with Iraq's constitution, not by unilateral action or force.

Finally, the referendum may jeopardize Iraqi Kurdistan's regional trade relations, and international assistance of all kinds, even though none of Iraq's partners wish this to be the case. This is simply the reality of this very serious situation. In contrast, genuine dialogue, the alternative, which we urge Kurdish leaders to embrace, holds the promise of resolving a great many of Iraqi Kurds' legitimate grievances, and establishing a new and constructive course for Baghdad-Erbil relations that benefit all the people of Iraq.

The Kurds can be proud already of what the referendum process has produced, including more Kurdish unity, reviving the Kurdish parliament for the first time in nearly two years, and placing important issues on the international stage, with partners and friends prepared to build on the spirit of cooperation seen between Iraqi Security Forces and Kurdish Peshmerga in the campaign against ISIS to help resolve outstanding issues. Unfortunately, the referendum next week will jeopardize all of this momentum and more.

The referendum itself is now all the more unnecessary given the alternative path that has been prepared and endorsed by the United States and the international community.

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Press Releases: Belize's Independence Day

Press Statement
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
September 20, 2017

On behalf of the Government of the United States, we send our best wishes to the people of Belize on your Independence Day, September 21st.

Our countries enjoy a long-standing and strong friendship, rooted in shared values and commitment to keeping our citizens safe, supporting democratic institutions, defending human rights, and promoting economic prosperity.

On this 36th anniversary of your nation's independence, we wish all Belizeans a peaceful and prosperous year.

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[Press Releases: Global Counterterrorism Forum Deliverables Fact Sheet](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 20, 2017

Below is the text of the fact sheet issued by the Global Counterterrorism Forum on September 20, 2017.

Begin text:

September 2017

THE DELIVERABLES FACT SHEET

The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) continues to provide an informal, a-political, multilateral platform to identify critical civilian counterterrorism (CT) needs, mobilize the necessary expertise and resources to support capacity building, and enhance global CT cooperation. Re-emphasizing the Forum's commitment to an action-oriented and rule of law-based approach to address the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism, the Eighth GCTF Ministerial Plenary Meeting will include a number of concrete and practical deliverables.

ENDORSEMENT OF NEW GCTF FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

- **The Zurich-London Recommendations on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism Online.** This document contains a set of internationally recognized, non-binding recommendations for preventing and countering violent extremism online, as well as specific good practices for content-based responses and communications-based

responses. The Recommendations were developed under the co-leadership of Switzerland and the United Kingdom, under the auspices of the CVE Working Group.

- **The Antalya Memorandum on Good Practices on the Protection of Soft Targets in a Counterterrorism Context.** This Memorandum informs and guides governments and private industry as they work together to develop policies, practices, guidelines, programs, and approaches in protecting their citizens from terrorist attacks on soft targets. It was developed under the co-leadership of Turkey and the United States.

SEPTEMBER 2016 – SEPTEMBER 2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **The P/CVE National Action Plans Task Force:** Under the auspices of the GCTF CVE Working Group, *Hedayah* and the Global Center on Cooperative Security (GCCS), developed guidelines and good practices for developing national CVE strategies with Kenya, Somalia, Nigeria and Pakistan.
- **A Second Symposium on Preventing and Countering Terrorists' Use of the Internet (TUI)** was hosted by the People's Republic of China. Key themes included the need to emphasize the role of the United Nations, the need to assist developing countries to build their capacity to address TUI, and the importance to enhance partnerships with the private sector.
- **The Counter Violent Extremism in Prisons (CVE-P) Program:** Co-led by Australia and Indonesia, under the auspices of the GCTF Detention and Reintegration (DR) Working Group, this is an innovative program featuring a state-tailored, interactive training with ongoing follow-up support that assists participating prison officials in Indonesia, Kenya, and Morocco to counter and build resilience to radicalization among inmate populations.
- **Policy Brief on Rehabilitating Juvenile Violent Extremist Offenders:** This policy brief was prepared in December 2016 by the GCCS and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague (ICCT), within the context of the GCTF DR Working Group and expands on the *Neuchâtel Memorandum on Good Practices for Juvenile Justice in a Counterterrorism Context* to address the needs of children engaged in terrorism-related activity.
- **Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Trends, Dynamics and Policy Responses:** This Analytical Paper, developed in December 2016 by the ICCT, under the auspices of the GCTF Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) Working Group, enhances the collective understanding of some of the current trends and dynamics of the FTF phenomenon, and reflects on policy responses in this domain.
- To support the practical implementation of the GCTF *The Hague-Marrakech Memorandum* and its *Addendum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon, with a focus on Returning FTFs*, *Hedayah* developed the **Catalogue on FTF Related CVE and Returnee Programs**, which was launched in December 2016. This online tool provides an inventory of programs sponsored or led by countries that all UN Member States may find useful or appropriate for their particular national context. It is

intended to serve as a living document and will be updated on an ongoing basis.

- **Implementing the GCTF Neuchâtel Memorandum on Juvenile Justice in the Counterterrorism Context:** The International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ) organized a practitioner workshop on the *Neuchâtel Memorandum*, which was developed by the GCTF Criminal Justice and Rule of Law (CJ-ROL) Working Group as part of the Life Cycle Initiative. The workshop contributed to a set of practitioners' notes reflecting countries' experience and advice for addressing children's rights in the CT context.
- **A Dialogue on Countering Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Radicalization to Violence in Central Asia:** Led by the United States under the auspices of the GCTF FTF Working Group, this dialogue assisted Central Asian states in addressing the challenges of countering FTFs, and in implementing the GCTF [*The Hague – Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon*](#) and UN Security Council Resolution 2178.
- Promoting the **Initiative to Address the Life Cycle of Radicalization to Violence** (Life Cycle Initiative) at practitioners' level. The Initiative Co-leads, Turkey and the United States, together with George Washington University's Program on Extremism, organized a practitioner-level workshop to introduce the Life Cycle Initiative and its web-based Toolkit to a wide range of practitioners and implementers.
- The **GCTF FTF Knowledge Hub**, developed by the ICCT under the auspices of the GCTF FTF Working Group, officially went live in May 2017. The GCTF FTF Knowledge Hub is a mechanism that enables the GCTF Members to share relevant data and exchange good practices. It will assist the GCTF Members by connecting, sharing and developing initiatives and expertise in a dedicated online environment.

SEPTEMBER 2017 ANNOUNCEMENTS OF NEW GCTF INITIATIVES

- **The Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism Initiative:** The Netherlands will lead a new GCTF Initiative on the Nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism. The objectives of this Initiative are to create awareness and better understanding of the nexus by identifying push and pull factors and determine national law(s) and structures currently in place. Furthermore, the Initiative aims to develop a set of internationally recognized non-binding good practices, which can serve as the basis for international engagement, and enhance action-oriented discussions on the local, national and regional level.
- **The Initiative on Addressing the Challenge of Returning Families of Foreign Terrorist Fighters:** The Netherlands and the United States will lead a new Initiative on addressing the families who accompany Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (RFTFs), or were acquired in the conflict zones, and are looking to return to a third country or their country of origin. The objectives of the Initiative are to raise awareness,

identify needs, and leverage expertise and experiences to better understand the motivations of family members of FTFs and to tailor the existing tools to deal with the challenge of potentially radicalized returning family members; and to develop a set of internationally-recognized non-binding good practices, which can serve as the basis for international engagement, assistance, and training to address the potential challenge posed by family members of FTFs who seek to flee the conflict zone for a third country or country of origin, and how they are addressed by authorities upon return.

- **The Initiative to Address Homegrown Violent Extremists:** Morocco and the United States will launch a new Initiative on addressing the growing threat posed by ISIL/Da'esh-inspired and linked Homegrown Violent Extremists (HVEs), exploring ways for stakeholders to tackle these issues in a coordinated manner. This Initiative, implemented in partnership with the IIJ, will develop new Good Practices on this issue with a focus on highlighting practical steps governments and practitioners can take to detect, intervene and address HVEs. These Good Practices will serve as a companion document to the GCTF *The Hague-Marrakech Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon*. The Initiative to address HVEs will explore factors that are driving individuals to become HVEs, how these individuals can be better identified, highlight any differences in the HVE radicalization process from that of FTFs, promote interventions to dissuade or prevent individuals from becoming HVEs, and identify opportunities for stakeholders to coordinate and collaborate more effectively to prevent, detect, intervene, and respond.

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[Press Releases: Regarding the Earthquake in Mexico](#)

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 19, 2017

Our thoughts and prayers are with the people of Mexico affected by today's 7.1-magnitude earthquake and other recent natural disasters. We stand ready to provide assistance should our neighbors request our help. Our embassy in Mexico City has sent out public messages to U.S. citizens in Mexico, and the embassy stands ready to provide consular assistance to any U.S. citizens who may have been affected. We offer our condolences to any who were injured or lost loved ones.

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[Press Releases: United States and Cuba Hold Sixth Bilateral Commission Meeting in Washington, D.C.](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
September 20, 2017

The United States and Cuba held the sixth Bilateral Commission meeting in Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, September 19. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs John Creamer led the U.S. delegation. The Cuban delegation was led by Josefina Vidal, the Foreign Ministry's Director General for U.S. Affairs.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the incidents affecting diplomatic personnel at the U.S. Embassy in Havana. The United States reiterated its deep concern for the safety and security of the U.S. Embassy community in Havana and the urgent need to identify the cause of these incidents and to ensure they cease. The delegations also reviewed the Administration's priorities and areas for engagement in the interests of the United States and the Cuban people, including human rights; implementation of the Migration Accords; and protecting the national security and public health and safety of the United States.

The Bilateral Commission last met in December 2016.

For further information, please contact WHA Press at WHAPress@state.gov.

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