

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



Translation

THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
MALE',
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

State Policy

Terrorism and Violent Extremism

Introduction

In today's globalized world, terrorism is not confined to any specific country, nor does it occur in a particular set of countries. The threat of terror is real even for the world's most powerful and the weakest alike. Today terrorism is a global threat. Even though it is perceived that developed nations are more capable of dealing with terror, the simple fact is that there is no individual in any part of the world who is immune to the dangers of terrorism.

Terrorist organizations proactively indoctrinate members with violent extremist ideology as a means to propagate and encourage the realization of their terror objectives. Large-scale terrorist attacks in the recent past have had their origins in violent extremist ideology.

Today, one of the biggest threats to the people, and the national security of the Maldives emanates from the dangers posed by violent extremism and terrorism. Actions to mitigate and contain these threats continue to be a top priority for the Government.

Terrorism in the Maldives today

The difficult truth today is that there are people, however small in number, in the Maldives who are motivated by and cultivate violent extremist and terrorist ideology. In addition, there are also those in the Maldives who encourage, and facilitate Maldivians to travel abroad to participate and engage in foreign conflicts.

Today, national borders are transgressed with ease by the use of a laptop or a mobile phone with an internet connection. Hence, terrorist and violent extremist organizations operating overseas are able to easily infiltrate and spread their influence into the Maldives, irrespective of boundaries.

In addition to the action required to address these threats, domestic and social problems brought about by violent extremism and related terrorist activities, require urgent national consideration and attention.

It is distressing to note that a limited number of Maldivian men have travelled to fight in various overseas conflicts, and some of them have chosen to take their wives and children along with them. As a result of such ideologies, and resultant lifestyle, these families tend to be isolated from the community and children marginalized to the fringes. Of concern is the fact that a large number of social issues that arise from violent extremism specifically affect women and children.

As a nation, Maldives is gravely concerned by these issues and have continued to take concrete steps to contain these challenges, but recognizes that a lot remains to be done.

The Government is concerned that some Maldivians living outside the country have exaggerated the issue of violent extremism and terrorism beyond its severity in the Maldives, and that these individuals continue to make efforts to encourage the international community to take actions against the country's interests, based on incorrect facts and false allegations. Such actions harm and continue to exert a huge cost on the economy and subsequently, on the people of the Maldives.

The Government condemns such self-serving actions that are undertaken by a small number of individuals , such as appearing in interviews and participating in news and television shows, directed towards tourists travelling to Maldives, whereby adversely impacting an economy majorly based on tourism.

Despite these actions being carried out in the name of freedom and democracy, the Government regards these as acts which put the individuals' own needs above the interests of the country and its people. These actions are unethical and carried out in bad faith, with no regard to the direct nor indirect harm caused to the country and its people.

International obligations

Today, the issue of terrorism and violent extremism is a major issue being given special focus in the international arena and a topic of impassioned debate.

In a globalized world, despite being a small country, the Maldives acknowledges its obligations to the international community. The Maldivian Government's policy on terrorism and violent extremism is to repudiate every act of terrorism, and to take a central and active role to work against these issues internationally.

Listed below are steps that the Maldives commits to take:

1. It is imperative that the United Nations promptly complete the work of the Convention on Terrorism, in order to enable these issues to be addressed under a detailed and comprehensive international legal instrument. Hence, the Maldives calls on the United Nations to fast-track its work on the Convention.
2. Maldives will take all necessary measures against terrorism and violent extremism in accordance with the United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, which was passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006, and the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, which was submitted by the UN Secretary General to the General Assembly in December 2015.

3. Maldives will pursue to strengthen the work under the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, which was signed in 1987.
4. Maldives has joined the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism, which was initiated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and will continue to work actively in the Alliance.
5. Maldives will actively participate in the efforts of the Commonwealth's Countering Violent Extremism Unit.
6. Maldives will join international treaties, which aim to prevent or combat terrorism, such as the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty.

In summation, Maldives will be an active member of the international community in its efforts in combatting and countering terrorism and violent extremism.

The policy of the Maldives on terrorism and violent extremism

The Maldives will have a zero-tolerance policy on terrorism and violent extremism. Further, the Maldives pledges to take swift measures against anyone committing an act or acts of terrorism, or financing, joining, encouraging or providing any manner of assistance or support to, terrorists and violent extremists.

As a result of the amendment brought to the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Act No: 32/2015) last year, it is now a crime for Maldivians to join or attempt to join or fight in any overseas conflict. In addition, the Act criminalizes financing or funding of terrorism or any related activity, and in line with these amendments, the Government remains committed to effectively identifying and investigating such crimes.

However, the Government acknowledges that identifying individuals who participate in such overseas civil conflicts is, in its nature, an arduous task, and that more work needs to be done to strengthen identification and investigation processes.

Terrorism and violent extremism can only be prevented with the coordination and assistance of all institutions. Hence, the Government established the National Counter Terrorism Centre under the Ministry of Defense and National Security earlier this year.

The mandate of the Centre is to lead and coordinate the work of all State institutions relating to terrorism and violent extremism. Further, the National Counter Terrorism Centre will re-energize and reinforce the work of the Government in combatting terrorism and violent extremism.

Work currently being undertaken to prevent terrorism and violent extremism

1. Formulating the National Counter Terrorism Strategy and the Counter Terrorism Response Plan;
2. Analyzing information and intelligence gathered by State bodies, and reinforcing the efficiency and timeliness of counter measures;
3. Planning and conducting programs aimed at safeguarding tourist resorts and the travel industry;
4. Planning and conducting security programs for sea ports, airports and sectors of major economic infrastructure;
5. Conducting additional programs in conjunction with international bodies and other countries on preventing terrorism and violent extremism;
6. Taking measures to understand and address social issues stemming from terrorism and violent extremism;

7. Taking measures to assess and prevent conceivable threats to national security from foreign nationals entering the Maldives;
8. Developing a legislative frame work on national security.

Work to be undertaken in the future

1. Conducting a baseline study on the scale and severity of terrorism and violent extremism in the Maldives, and taking action on the same;
2. Expanding and further strengthening activities conducted regionally, bilaterally and internationally to prevent terrorism and violent extremism to ensure Maldives takes a leading and active role;
3. Conducting a security assessment of sea ports, airports and major national infrastructure, and taking active measures to further strengthen the same;
4. Ensuring the safety and safeguarding the tourism industry from acts of terrorism and violent extremism by increasing the safety and security of resorts and tourist accommodation;
5. Further strengthening the measures taken to address domestic and social issues caused by violent extremist ideology, especially in relation to women and children;
6. Further strengthening the mechanism for information and intelligence gathering and sharing with the international community, and facilitating timely remedial action;
7. Developing and conducting de-radicalization and rehabilitation programs;
8. Developing campaigns aimed at increasing public awareness of terrorism and violent extremism;

9. Joining, ratifying and implementing international treaties preventing terrorism such as the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty;
10. Assessing the legislative framework on preventing terrorism, and developing necessary laws and regulations as required;
11. Formulating and enacting legislation on national security;
12. Assessing potential threats to national security posed by foreign nationals entering Maldives and taking appropriate measures.

Conclusion

This paper details the concerns of the Government with regard to terrorism and violent extremism, and the preventative measures the Government currently undertakes and outlines the policies and actions it will continue to take.

Further, the Government wishes to note that amongst the issues identified in this paper, the most vital of issues relates to those financing terrorist activities, and those who facilitate, assist and finance others to travel overseas and travel overseas themselves to participate in conflicts and terrorist activities abroad.

In addition, the issues relating to terrorism and violent extremism cause major harm to the economy and the people of Maldives, also causing the international community to view the Maldives with unease. It will also negatively impact Maldivians who travel overseas for business, education and other legitimate causes relating to their daily lives, including Maldivians residing in other parts of the world.

Therefore, viewing terrorism and violent extremism, and its impact on the country and its people, with deep concern, this paper has been formulated recognizing the importance of the issue to be debated in the Peoples' Majlis for deliberation and decisions of the Majlis with regards to the issue and further actions.