

# National Counter Terrorism Centre



**NCTC Newsletter - Volume 34: January 2020**

## 2019 at a Glance

*NCTC, January 2020*

National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) spearheads the national PCVE efforts through a whole of government and society approach. Hence, NCTC in collaboration with the stakeholder agencies have conducted a substantial number of activities in 2019.

NCTC in collaboration with President's Office and UNDP Maldives conducted the first "National

National High Level Dialogue on Promoting Peace and Security



26 February 2019. The CT and PCVE policy drivers of the government exchanged information on the scale of terrorism and extremism in Maldives.

In the effort to increase the capacity of information and intelligence processing of the security and law enforcement agencies of Maldives, NCTC began working to establish a fusion cell with the assistance of the US government since last year. For this purpose, a capacity building Programme for the agencies was conducted during August 2019, and a training program on "Modern Media and Influence" was conducted from 09 to 19 September 2019. For these programmes 08 intelligence personnel and 13 security force personnel participated respectively.

Counter Radicalization Committee Meeting



High Level Dialogue on Promoting Peace and Security" for the government senior officials on

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NCTC in collaboration with UNODC and UNDP have facilitated the participation of 34 personnel from government and civil society organizations in 8 international workshops/ seminars for capacity



building in CT and PCVE, Anti-money Laundering and Prevention of Terrorism Financing. Furthermore, NCTC have also organized 12 workshops/ seminars in Maldives with the same collaborations for 198 participants including the government stakeholders, and civil society organizations/ NGOs.

Additionally, to the UN collaborations, NCTC have



conducted 2 prominent workshops. First programme on "The Role of Religious leaders in PVE" was conducted in June 2019 for 54

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participants, in collaboration with the Hedaya of Abu Dhabi, UAE, a Centre of excellence in PVE. A Second Programme was conducted in July 2019 on "Anti-Terrorism and Anti-Extremism" for 64 participants from government and civil society organizations, in collaboration with Naif Arab University for Security Sciences ...continued on page 3



of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



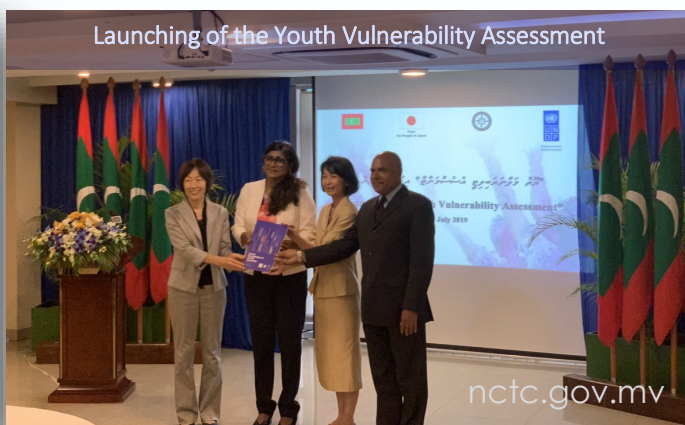
Likewise, national efforts focus on public awareness and education through intervention programmes across the country. A special attention is given on education sector since 2019.



The role of education sector on PVE is vital, hence, NCTC in collaboration with Ministry of Education and UNDP Maldives have conducted workshops for 172 school principals and senior leadership on identifying signs and symptoms of radicalization and religious extremism in schools and institutions.

A youth vulnerability assessment was conducted by NCTC in collaboration with UNDP Maldives. The assessment is an extensive research conducted by National Counter Terrorism Centre and UNDP Maldives with support from Government of Japan, to better understand the root causes and

vulnerabilities leading Maldivian youth to violent



extremism. And also with assistance from UNDP Maldives the “National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism” and “Strategic Communications Action Plan for NAP” drafts were formulated during 2019.

Maldives Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and Maldivians traveling to join terrorist organizations is a grave concern to Maldives national security and public safety. Therefore, Maldives is always being serious and concern about the threats of Terrorism and Violent Extremism (VE) in the region and Maldives.

Therefore, the biggest effort focus currently is on Counter Radicalization (CR) and PCVE. Establishing a de-radicalization facility had been a priority for Maldives. Under the Ministry of Home Affairs, the de-radicalization Centre will be established soon. Development of infrastructure is underway and near completion.

In the meantime, Programme concept development and capacity building is also in progress in consultation with UN and other agencies.

Tourism Sector Security is a paramount to Maldives. Hence, Ministry of ...continued on page 4

Tourism in collaboration with National Security Institutions will introduce Minimum Security Standards to resorts and tourist facilities very soon. In the meantime, Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) and Maldives Police Service (MPS) are continuously working on towards a comprehensive response plan in case of any intelligence or actual incident on any tourist facility. Terrorism prevention efforts are conducted through intelligence and information operations. Also kinetic response capacity building is an ongoing endeavor by MNDF.

Maldives brought vital amendments to Anti-Terrorism Law in 2019. With these MPS could effectively work on investigation, prosecution and law enforcement more effectively than before.

## NCTC Defines Violent Extremism

*NCTC, January 2020*

National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) issued guidance notes on how to define 'violent extremism' and identify individuals who subscribe to extremist ideologies.

### Unofficial Translation:

NCTC defines violent extremism as ideologies that radically and violently oppose and advocate against the spirit of the Maldivian Constitution, laws and regulations and social policies, in word and action.

Further elaborating on the definition, NCTC identified individuals who subscribe to violent

extremist ideologies as:

- People who deem others that do not follow their religious ideologies as infidels and non-Muslims, and, they believe that the property of such "non-Muslims" could be rightfully seized or damaged, and their lives could be rightfully taken;
- People who claim that Maldives is a "sinful state" and reject the nation;
- People who claim the Constitution as void, oppose the laws, regulations and policies of Maldives, reject the culture and traditions of the country, and attempt to disrupt the unity of the society.

In accordance with these notes, NCTC lists acts committed by extremists in the name of their ideologies, including:

- Rejecting the national flag, symbol and anthem of Maldives;
- Rejecting the national education curriculum, and withholding their children from attending school;
- Advocating for and spreading their ideologies;
- Depriving their children of international health standards, and propagating destructive ideologies that could endanger future generations;
- Oppressing women and children without regard for human rights; Thus, sexually abusing children in the name of marriage.

*"victory is changing the hearts of your opponents by gentleness and kindness."*

- Salahuddin Al-Ayyubi



# The Importance of a Free Press in Promoting Peace, Tolerance, and Respect

NCTC, January 2020

The media is widely regarded as the fourth branch of the government in the modern world. A professional free press is the best check and balance mechanism in a democracy. A self-regulating and responsible media bridges the gap between the government, the private sector, and the citizens. To put it simply, free media is the biggest and most influential watchdog in the running of a country.

Media is under scrutiny in some countries and a lot of journalists reporting on crime and terrorism have been targeted across the globe. International NGO Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) latest figures show 65 journalists have been killed in connection with provision of news and information in 2017 across the world. Out of these 65 deaths, RSF reports that 26 were collateral victims of air strikes, artillery bombardments, or a suicide bombing. The remaining 39 journalists were murdered and deliberately targeted according to statistics released by RSF.

Given the media's pivotal role in providing information to the populace, it is vital for, firstly, the government to establish an environment conducive for a free press, and secondly, the media to be professional.

During his speech to commemorate the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Maldivian Journalism, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih (December, 2018) stated the importance of freedom of press and its role in making the government accountable. In his speech, he urged the media to be a self regulatory body and to set its own limits and its own best practices. President Solih's promise to ensure freedom of the press and his assurance that the government of Maldives will not impede the media's duty to responsibly inform the people will ensure a free press.



*While we celebrate the courage of journalists today, it is also important for us to remember those we have lost; the forcefully disappeared journalist Ahmed Rilwan of Maldives Independent and blogger Yameen Rasheed who was brutally murdered.*

(December, 2018) — His Excellency President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

Professionalism of media in the context of PCVE means to play a responsible role in bringing the correct messages to the audience. This entails everything from editorial staff

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ensuring extremist narratives are counterbalanced to journalists on the ground to ensure the victims' voices are heard over the message of the perpetrators.

Today's terrorist attacks focuses on sensationalism and putting on a show for their targeted recipients as much, if not more, than causing direct harm.

Today media is also used by terrorists as a recruitment tool. It is the role of the free press is to ensure messages of peace, tolerance and respect reaches the vulnerable population. As the government practices a whole-of-society approach to PCVE in the Maldives, it is imperative that the media plays its part.

NCTC has been collaborating with its media partners to help bring the messages and the counter narratives to the citizens. Earlier this year, NCTC also have discussed in 2019 in ways to build resilience and promote peace and tolerance by through the media. For that the Centre is preparing a communications strategy to engage media in peacebuilding in Maldives.

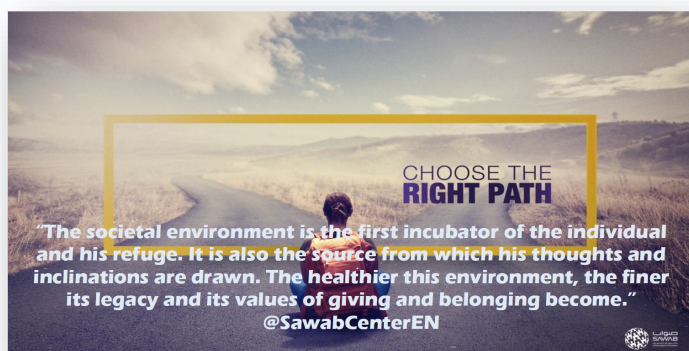
# Committed for Peace and Security

*NCTC, January 2020*

During the commemoration of the day Maldives Embraced Islam President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih (December, 2018) had called upon all Islamic scholars, teachers, and educational institutes to instill authentic Islamic knowledge in the hearts of our children, to protect them from making wrong choices in life, and to guide them to the right path.

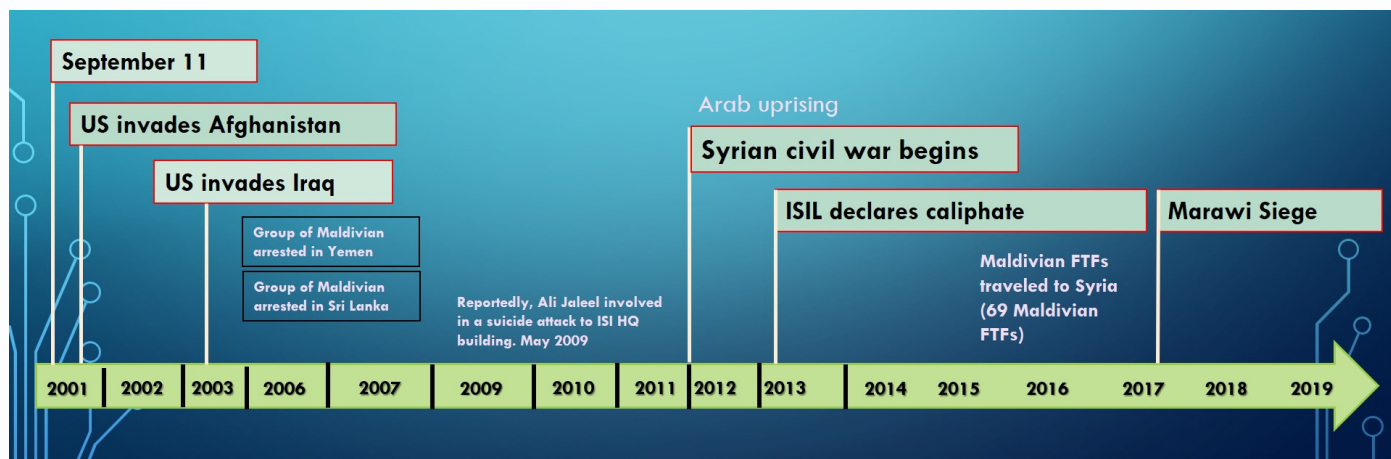
The Minister of Islamic Affairs Dr. Ahmed Zahir (December, 2018) stressed on being thankful to Allah for His abundant bounties. Minister Zahir reminded that God takes away from those not thankful to Him. Tourism and the fisheries industry are something that should not be taken for granted. Therefore it is in every citizen's interest to respect Maldives' trade partners and to be welcoming and tolerant towards visitors from other countries.

Echoing President Solih's call for peace and tolerance, Minister of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment Hon. Ahmed Mahloof (December, 2018) gave commitment to engage with youth to address the growth of violent crimes. He publicly announced his vision to solve gang violence with dialogue, rather than through punitive punishment.



# Global and Regional Conflicts Serve as a Strong Pull Factor of Violent Extremism

By: LTC Amanulla A Rasheed



The flow of foreign fighters into Iraq and Syria continued since 2011. (Between 25,000 and 30,000 foreign fighters have entered Syria and Iraq since 2011, 7,000 in the first six months of 2015).

Source: Global Terrorism Index 2015

## Terrorist Attacks in 2019

The Sri Lanka attacks draw attention to the risk posed by militants apparently aligned with the Salafi-jihadist group.

Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal (data until April 29, 2019 and excluding Afghanistan) and International Centre for the Study of Radicalization.

The April 21 terrorist attacks on hotels and churches in Sri Lanka were the worst in South Asia (excluding Afghanistan) recorded to date in

**“Global and regional tensions greatly drive the security threats.”**

terms of single-day fatalities.

In the wider region, other areas in the last year have been prone to attacks by different types of militancy: broadly left-wing extremism, separatism and Islamism. Kashmir and Pakistan’s Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces are highest-risk, with Islamist groups especially active in these restive areas.

A growing Islamist threat across South Asia could arise from groups who are inspired by IS and may have fought for it in the Middle East.

## Impacts

Indian intelligence agencies ...continued on page 8



will explore any

- links between the perpetrators of the Sri Lanka attacks and IS sympathizers in India.
- Bangladeshi organizations linked to IS may try to recruit from Rohingya refugee camps.
- The Maldives, possibly having the most IS affiliates of any South Asian country, will urgently trace any returnees from the Middle East.
- Churches could be an increasingly attractive target for IS-aligned militants across the region.

## A Glance to the Risks and opportunities in South and South East Asia

The challenges facing the region involve domestic politics, bilateral ties and multilateral dynamics, which includes the following impacts:

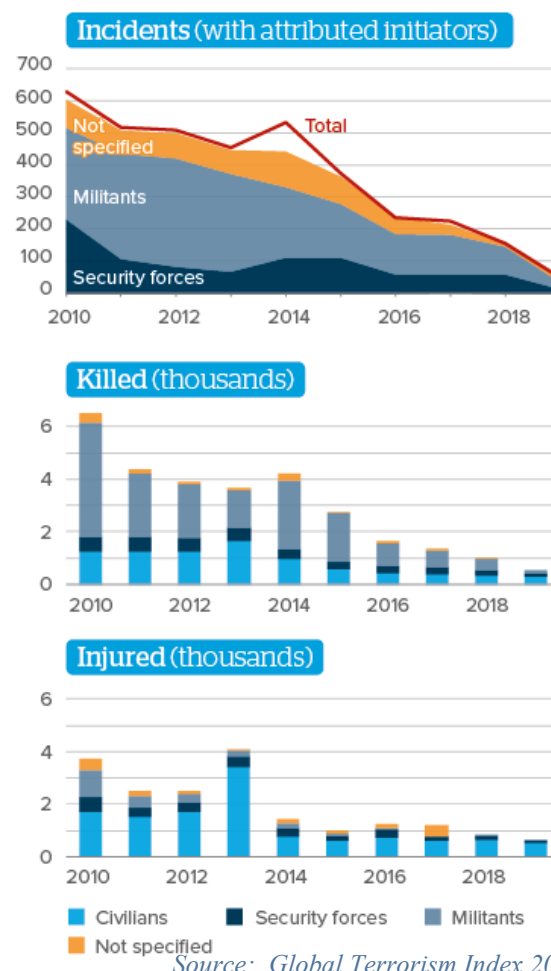
The “The Kashmir situation is significant to the risk landscape in South Asia. If insurgency in Indian-administered Kashmir intensifies, Pakistan’s military may find it hard to resist involvement through militant proxies”. The fact is due to that Pakistan is confident it can avert being blacklisted by a global watchdog group over "terrorism" financing. Hence, Islamabad need to disclaim ties to militancy, to avert Financial Action Task Force (FATF) ‘blacklisting’, which would be a restraining factor. In the ensuing cross-border friction, each side would test the other’s limits.

“Key opportunities across South and South-east Asia relate to trade deals. The ASEAN states and

Major terrorist incidents and related fatalities in South Asia have been steadily decreasing since 2014...

### Fatalities and injuries in major incidents

Note: 2019 data is until April 29



five partners will finalize Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), paving the way for lower tariffs between them.” But the fact states that the 10 members of ASEAN, plus China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and India—that account for half the world’s population and about one-third of global GDP is a sprawling free trade agreement. Meanwhile, India appears close to an agreement with the United States to put aside recent tariff spats.

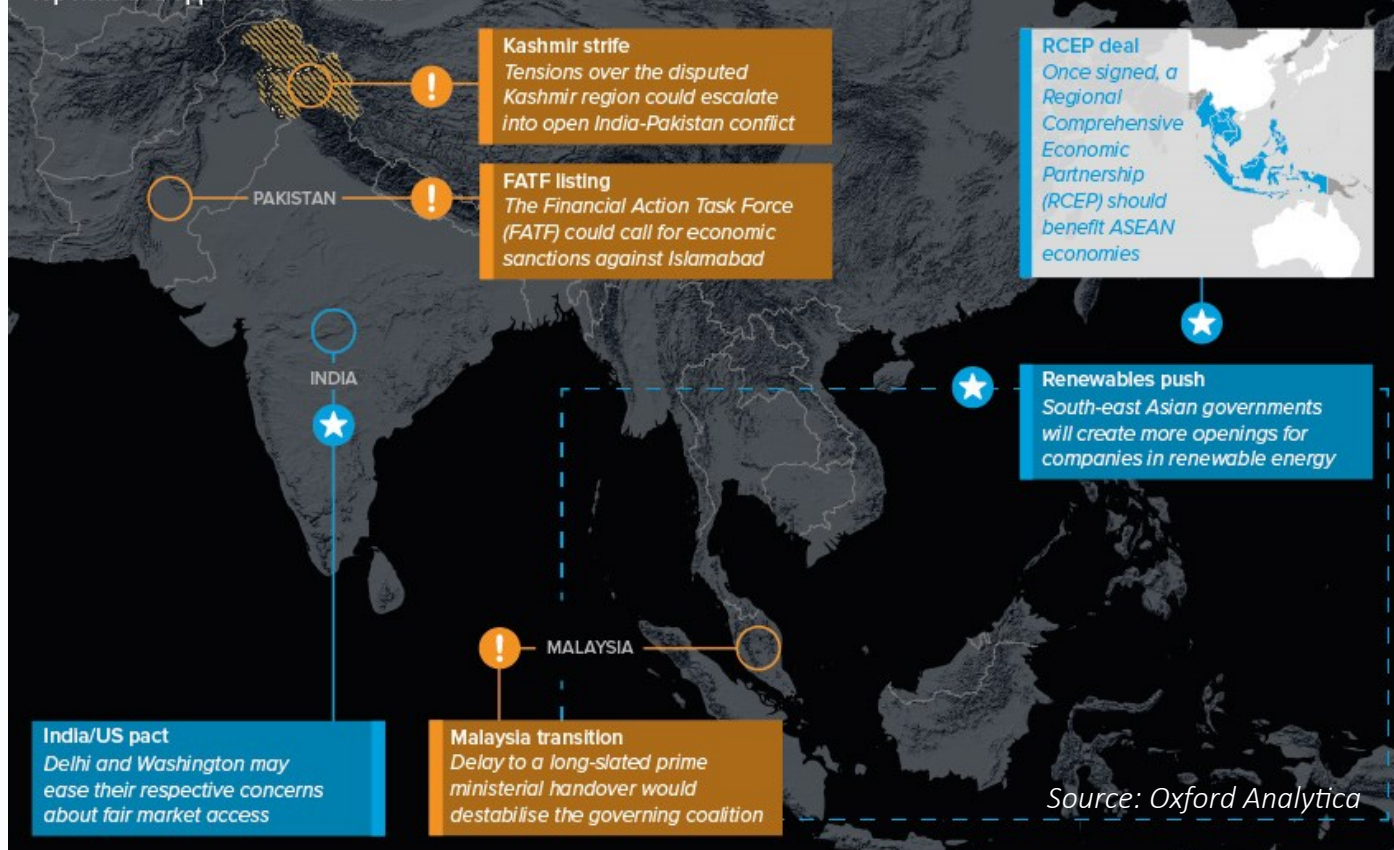
Reference: Oxford Analytica

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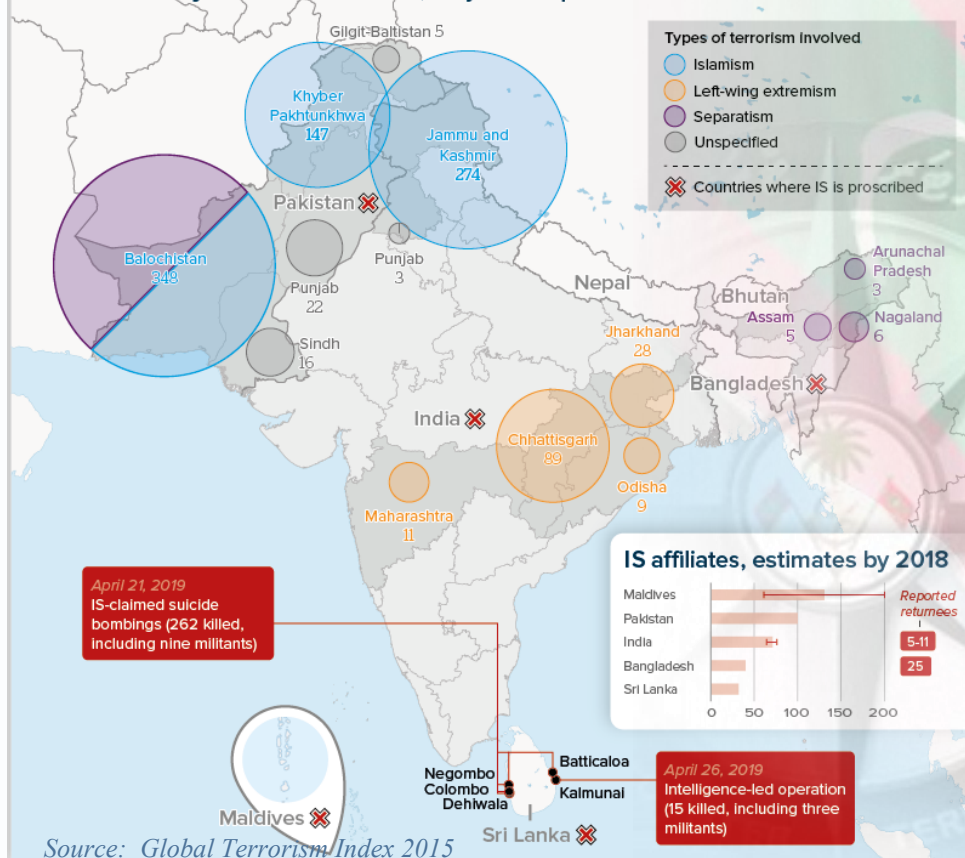
Complex intra- and inter-governmental relations will be key themes in the year ahead

## Top risks and opportunities for 2020



...but the current threat may be evolving, especially following Islamic State (IS)'s territorial losses in Syria

## Fatalities in major terrorist incidents, May 2018-April 2019





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