

# National Counter Terrorism Centre



**NCTC Newsletter - Volume 69: December 2023**

## **UNITY AND RESILIENCE IS THE STRENGTH OF MALDIVES**



*photo: presidency.gov.mv*

**A**t the official ceremony his Excellency Dr. Mohamed Muizzu emphasised that every citizen bears responsibility for fostering mutual respect towards protecting the honour and dignity of others. The National Unity Day is observed annually on December 26 which commemorates the unity and solidarity demonstrated by citizens following the catastrophic 2004 tsunami.

Emphasising about the lasting qualities of togetherness within the Maldivian community, President Dr. Muizzu expressed his hope for Maldivians to regain and strengthen the unity that has waned over time. He shared his vision for the Maldives to rebuild and invigorate the elements of family ties, friendships, and communal bonds, aiming to protect honor and dignity while nurturing long-lasting compassion and understanding.

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enduring trust in one another, and their steadfast confidence in a brighter tomorrow. It stands as proof of the potency of unity and serves as a reminder that even in the face of unimaginable tragedy, hope can endure.

National Unity Day stands as a poignant reminder to treasure the principles of community, collaboration, and steadfast solidarity. It's an occasion to pay tribute to the fortitude of the Maldivian populace and to perpetuate their heritage of unity in confronting any adversity.

On this National Unity Day, while the Maldives commemorates the 2004 tsunami, let us not solely extend our sympathies but also derive motivation from their narrative. May their unity and resilience serve as an inspirational guidepost for everyone, reminding us that amidst the bleakest moments, the power of community can illuminate the path ahead.

## Equality gives Emphasis to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

11 December 2023



**T**he Vice President of Maldives His Excellency Hussain Mohamed Latheef, at the Opening Ceremony Panel Discussion on Human Rights of the Human Rights 75 High-Level Event outlined

important measures that could be undertaken to underscore centrality of human rights in response to global challenges.

These included that first, we must understand that human rights are “non-negotiable” and must be held as minimum standards to respect the dignity of every individual. Secondly, human rights promotion should be a holistic approach involving governments, civil society organizations, businesses, international bodies, and individuals. Thirdly, by fostering human rights education at all levels, we can cultivate a culture of respect for human rights and empower individuals now and in the future, to become advocates for change. Next, in our pursuit to safeguard human rights, it is crucial to recognize and appreciate the role of multilateralism and the rules-based international order to promote and safeguard our communities to promote peace, security and development. And finally, we must encourage the growing engagement of young people in climate change and human rights discourse countering pessimistic views and offering hope for inclusive policies and actions.

*The first and the foremost basic right is the right to live and respect human life. The Holy Quran lays down:*

*Whosoever kills a human being without (any reason like) man slaughter, or corruption on earth, it is as though he had killed all mankind ... (5:32)*

*Do not kill a soul which Allah has made sacred except through the due process of law ... (6:151)*

*Reference: Allamah Abu al-'A'la Mawdudi. "Human Rights in Islam." International Islamic University Malaysia. Accessed December 29, 2023. <https://www.iiu.edu.my/deed/articles/hr/hr.html>.*

# Propaganda: The Fifth-Generation Warfare Tool



military figures have given examples of the art of warfare starting from close-quarter combat, to the surgical operations carried out by unmanned aerial vehicles and other precision weaponry.

## Propaganda as a Revolutionary Warfare Tool

Being said above, to understand the current revolutionary stage of modern propaganda, the aligning of the revolutionary warfare shifts in modern times has been known as network-centric warfare (NCW), which has continued to rise with undefined characteristics, similar to propaganda.

NCW emphasizes information superiority for battlespace efficacy, but it is clear that the mechanics of how knowledge flows are just as important as those about networks and communication, which would be a better way to leverage new technology by networking together a “system of systems”. This task organization would achieve interoperability to deliver better performance in kinetic solutions but without the end state of it. Hence, modern propaganda is a better example of NCW and a major tool of fifth-generation warfare.

Describing what modern propaganda would now enable us to identify how different actors use the concept of fifth-generation warfare to gain greater access to time-sensitive information and to acquire advantages in information dominance for improved decision-making. Considering these factors, modern propaganda is taking its lead in the pre-conflict phases of statecraft.

National security threats differ from country to country. Our collective counter-propaganda strategies used against old-time print media and a few broadcast channels have been distorted and universally downgraded in the

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## Introduction

Propaganda is the dissemination of information, either facts or arguments, rumours to half-truths, or lies to influence public opinion. It is a systematic manipulation of beliefs, attitudes, or actions using symbols. There is no single vantage point from which to observe and assess its effects. Propaganda has evolved into a modern art through the centuries and has become the most formidable weapon of choice in the arsenal of statecraft. It is an exquisite and serious weapon that represents a new national security threat.

When propaganda and serious arguments cannot be discriminated then there will be bigger problems. Fake news propaganda is a new trend in cyberspace to create diversions among people to gain an advantage for the benefit of a particular group. But the internet companies and social media companies have created to trace and bring down such propaganda. Yet the war is still on.

To frame the issue of the spread of propaganda, the globalized world of state actors needs a dedicated focus on the pre-conflict phases of statecraft (all activities before actual conflict), which is the most resourceful ground for propaganda to flourish. When looking at the perspectives of developed military concepts, the kinetic end of the spectrum of war has been more engaged and researched by strategists. Famous

past centuries like the Cold War period. Still, new media platforms cause more threats, which enables modern propaganda tactics to target communities with precision, brute force or a mix of both.

As we all know, some common modern media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Viber, Snapchat, WhatsApp, X, Reddit, TikTok, and Messenger are examples, of the perfect network-centric warfare's "systems of systems" concept.

"Social media platforms have come to dominate almost every aspect of human interaction, from interpersonal relations to the global economy" (Bradshaw, S. 2020).

Today, state actors have applied the same playbook used during the Cold War as part of contemporary foreign interventions, such as disinformation and conspiracy theories injected into social and mainstream media to intensify ethnic and cultural tensions. Moreover, the people behind these accounts are not even real, but automated algorithms or codes designed to amplify propaganda, fake news and disinformation online.

Furthermore, in investigating the crime-terror nexus, far-right extremist groups have exploited modern propaganda, and network-centric warfare tool during the Covid-19 pandemic and dominated cyberspace to the extreme that counter-narrative messaging has been utmost vital to be expanded to address this phenomenon of violent extremism. This ideological warfare and the spread of disinformation and propaganda online are growing concerns for the future of international security. The use of social media for "hybrid" methods of warfare is a broader reflection of how technological innovation changes the nature of conflict.

"With anonymity, there is a lack of transparency about the source of information and whether

news, comments or debate come from authentic voices or ones trying to distort the public sphere" (Bradshaw, S. 2020).

### Non-state actors' Strategic Communication tool – Propaganda

Looking at a glance at the propaganda used by non-state actors, it has never been used more aggressively and effectively than it is today in particular, in-theater propaganda has come to be of fundamental priority to non-state actors operating across the political spectrum. Few groups have been as adept at offline outreach and they used propaganda and offline public diplomacy to systematically entrench itself within the local body politic, whenever and wherever conditions allowed. These organizations used strategic communication operations to further their respective insurgent aims.

The consumed propaganda method used by the Daesh or the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) consisted of audio-visual media products, everything that was broadcast and distributed in-theater through its bespoke communication infrastructure—documentaries, current affairs features, radio programs, photograph reports, newspapers, magazines, operation claims, theological literature, infographics, posters, billboards and so on. Moreover, the performative propaganda method used by Daesh was identified as more effective – relied on direct interpersonal engagement and was primarily delivered by outreach officials working on the ground in Syria, which involved continuous face-to-face interaction with Daesh and its civilian constituents. The most crucial physical component of its propaganda activism – the nuqtah i'lamiyyah, the media point initiative was complemented by Daesh's Center for Proselytization and Mosques. This caliphate-wide outreach unit was dedicated to in-theater recruitment operations.

Unlike Daesh, HAY'AT TAHRIR

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AL-SHAM (HTS) tends to spend much less time and



effort on consumed propaganda operations. Instead, it usually opts for a more personal mode of dissemination, chiefly in the form of the media cadres it sends to mosques to hand out literature after Friday prayers. According to interview respondents currently residing in HTS-held territory, there are several different mudafat, each of which is used for a distinct purpose. The two most prominent manifestations are those that are devoted to the muhajirin (foreign fighters) and those that serve the interests of the umara' (leaders). The muhajirin facilities offer a center of gravity for social and ideological incubation among HTS fighters and are also important nodes for fundraising and recruiting.

All these propaganda activities played a crucial role in the continued strategic communications operations focusing their efforts mainly on young children, coaching them in tahfidh and Shariah jurisprudence. After all, if the mother is a committed adherent of the jihadist ideology, then she is more likely to radicalize and recruit her children to its cause – female supporters are being used as a vector for ideology.

### Conclusions and Way Ahead

Henceforth, propaganda is the “Fifth-Generation Warfare Tool” as described, and this tool has been used by all actors both state and non-state, it is quite challenging when it comes to employing it as a national security tool for strategic

communications to prevent and counter-terrorism and criminal activities. When non-state actors like criminal groups and terrorist organizations continue investing in network-centric warfare (NCW), which has continued to rise with the revolutionary conflicts in the global fight to claim geo-economic territories, it has become a global challenge for the state actors. Along with cyberspace some terrorist organizations have advanced the usage of offline propaganda tactics and have very effectively contributed to their fight. Therefore, international state actors need to unite together to fight the common war in counter-terrorism, counter extremism and violent extremism. Again strategic communication is the best practical approach in counter propaganda.

#### Reference:

propaganda | Definition, History, Techniques, Examples, & Facts | Britannica

Bradshaw, Samantha, and Centre for International Governance Innovation. MODERN CONFLICT AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. Report. Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2020. 41-47. Accessed January 18, 2021. doi:10.2307/resrep27510.9.

Platforms apply algorithms — or automated sets of rules or instructions — to transform data into a desired output.

WINTER, CHARLIE, and HAID HAID. JIHADIST PROPAGANDA, OFFLINE: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS IN MODERN WARFARE. Report. Middle East Institute, 2018. Accessed January 20, 2021. doi:10.2307/resrep19953.1.

#### The National Risk Assessment (NRA) of money laundering and terrorism financing process seeks to strengthen the prevention system through:

- 1 Assessment of money laundering and terrorism financing risks facing a given country.
- 2 Assessment of the effectiveness of risk control strategies and policies.
- 3 Analysis of priorities to control risks.
- 4 Making justifiable decisions to loosen of anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing measures for low-risk products and sectors, if any.
- 5 Direct the financial and human resources in the optimal manner to strengthen the countering process.

# Preventing and Countering IED Workshop

06-07 December 2023

**UN**ODC in collaboration with the Government of Maldives held a 2-day workshop on preventing and countering IED related offences. The workshop held from 6 to 7 December covered the aspects of cross-regional and international cooperation and good practices in disruption, prevention, investigation and prosecution of offences involving the use of improvised explosive devices.

The discussions included Maldives' experience, success and challenges on international cooperation in criminal cases, information sharing mechanisms, case studies on the whole-of-

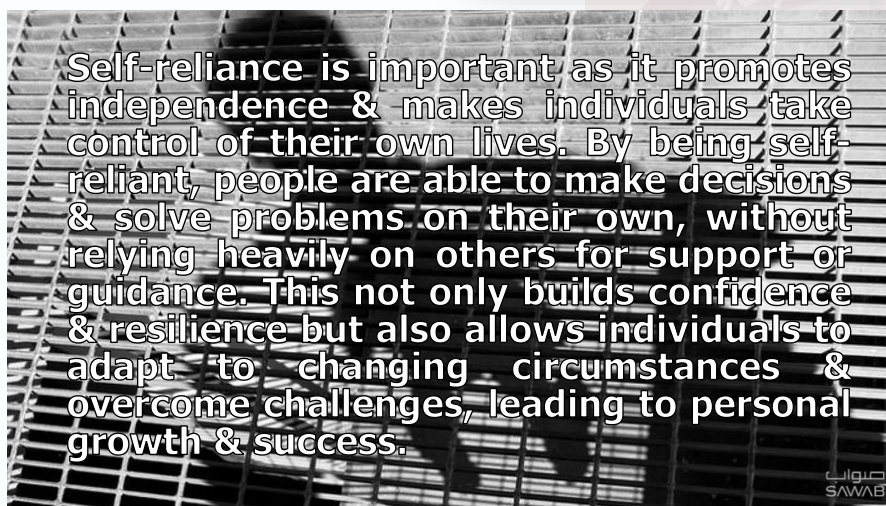
government approach and preventing and countering violent extremism.



# Session on Terrorism Threats and Response

12 - 14 December 2023

**N**CTC conducted a session on terrorism threats and response for the participants of the *Coast Guard Special Boat Squadron Qualification Course 1*. The session was held in Central Area Laamu Kadhdhoo. The session covered root causes, conditions conducive to violent extremism leading to terrorism and the importance of maritime domain in the threat environment.



## **Meeting with the National Reintegration Centre**

*04 December 2023*

NCTC engaged in fruitful discussions with the National Reintegration Center, exploring areas of collaboration for the coming year. NCTC works closely with NRC to ensure the sustainability of peace and harmony within the Maldivian communities. By working together, we aim to establish a society that is more resilient, cohesive, and inclusive, devoid of discrimination and marginalization.



## **Meeting with UNODC Global Maritime Crime Consultant**

*05 December 2023*

NCTC officials met with the UNODC consultant for the Global Maritime Crime Programme and the UNODC Programme Officer to discuss strengthening the maritime law enforcement capabilities and legal capacity to disrupt and counter maritime criminality. Specifically, deliberations were conducted with the aim of identifying the necessary measures to combat waterborne improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in

order to effectively prevent and respond to threats associated with IEDs in the Maldives.



## **Meeting with Officials of the US Embassy**

*17 December 2023*

Director General - NCTC meets US Assistant Defence Attaché with senior officials of both institutions. Officials discussed potential areas of collaboration in counter terrorism.





## Meetings with Key Partners

*12 December 2023*

NCTC held an introductory meeting with the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Information and Arts. This meeting marked an important step towards fostering collaboration and synergy between the NCTC and the ministry. NCTC is eager to further enhance its collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Information, and Arts and work towards achieving positive outcomes for a more resilient youth community.



*13 December 2023*

NCTC officials meet with the leadership of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). During the meeting, areas of mutual concern and avenues for cooperation were discussed. FIU is a crucial partner NCTC's ongoing endeavors to strengthen information sharing and promote collaboration among various agencies.



*13 December 2023*

DG and senior officials of NCTC met with the Minister of Homeland Security and Technology. This meeting marked a significant turning point in the NCTC and ministry's efforts to work together more effectively and strengthen national security. Continuing its collaboration with the Ministry of Homeland Security and Technology, NCTC aims to make the Maldives a safer and more peaceful place for all.



*...continued on page 10*

## Meetings with Key Partners

18 December 2023

NCTC held an introductory meeting with the Attorney General. The meeting served as a crucial milestone in the process of enhancing the legal framework pertaining to the prevention of violent extremism and the fight against terrorism. NCTC endeavors to assure the effective implementation of the Anti-Terrorism Act and the Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Act with the ongoing assistance of the Adjutant General's Office.



13 December 2023

NCTC held an introductory meeting with the Minister of Education. NCTC and the ministry have been working together to address violent extremism in Maldivian communities, and this meeting marked a significant step forward in that direction. NCTC emphasizes the critical nature of enhancing the education sector in order to cultivate a student body that is more resilient and capable of critical thinking, and to improve the abilities of educators to address societal issues that are conducive to preventing extremism in the

Maldives. Together with the Ministry, NCTC aims to build a more peaceful society.



20 December 2023

NCTC held an introductory meeting with the leadership of the Maldives National University (MNU). Potential areas of cooperation, including research and capacity building projects, were addressed throughout the discussion. Efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism must adhere to evidence-based approaches, and MNU is a key partner in this endeavor.



...continued on page 11

## Meetings with Key Partners

21 December 2023

NCTC held an introductory meeting with the Controller General of Immigration. Continuing its collaboration with the Maldives Immigration, NCTC aims to make the Maldives secure and safe from potential threats.



21 December 2023

NCTC held an introductory meeting with the leadership of the Ministry of Tourism. Areas of common concern and potential areas of collaboration were deliberated upon. The Ministry and the NCTC share the objective of establishing minimum security standards for all pertinent agencies and locations.



1 Jan 2024

**Highest Rainfall(mm) Recorded**

 Hulhulé



**179.7**



## The World Needs Peace: Humanitarian Assistance is Crucial for the people of Gaza

A statement on X platform made by H.E. the President of Maldives Dr. Mohamed Muizzu (23 Dec 2023) urged the international community for an immediate end to all hostilities and guarantee the rights of all Palestinians.

A step in the right direction by the UN Security Council should enable the safe delivery of aid to the people of Gaza. But this won't happen amid continuous airstrikes and brutal attacks. The people of Palestine have the right to self-determination.

The ongoing conflict in Gaza remains a distressing reminder of the dire need for peace and the critical necessity of humanitarian assistance for the millions affected by the enduring strife. As tensions persist, civilians continue to bear the brunt of violence, facing unfathomable challenges in accessing basic necessities and vital services.

The people of Gaza have endured a cycle of conflict and instability that has devastated communities, eroded infrastructure, and impeded socio-economic progress. Families grapple with the trauma of displacement, while children grow up amidst the constant specter of violence, robbing them of their childhood and prospects for a brighter future.

Amidst this turmoil, the call for peace resonates louder than ever. The resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is crucial, not only for the

stability of the region but also for the fundamental rights and well-being of the Gazan population. Meaningful and lasting peace can pave the way for reconstruction, economic development, and the restoration of hope among the beleaguered inhabitants.

However, the pursuit of peace must be complemented by immediate humanitarian assistance. Access to essential resources such as food, clean water, healthcare, and education remains alarmingly limited for many Gazans. Humanitarian aid is not merely a gesture of goodwill; it is a lifeline that sustains vulnerable communities, providing them with the means to survive and rebuild amid adversity.

The global community bears a collective responsibility to prioritize the provision of humanitarian aid and support initiatives aimed at fostering peace in Gaza. International organizations, governments, and civil society must unite efforts to ensure unhindered access for aid organizations, enabling them to deliver assistance efficiently to those in need.

Ultimately, peace and humanitarian aid are intertwined elements crucial for alleviating the suffering of the people of Gaza. A concerted and unwavering commitment to both peace-building efforts and sustained humanitarian support is imperative to foster stability, restore dignity, and offer hope for a better tomorrow in Gaza.

Photo: <https://www.vocfm.co.za/al-quds-foundation-to-launch-gaza-initiative/>



## United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

**A**s a member state, the Maldives adopts the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/RES/60/288), which is a unique global instrument to enhance national, regional and international efforts to counter-terrorism. Through its adoption by consensus in 2006, all United Nations Member States agreed to a common strategic and operational approach to fighting terrorism.

The Strategy reaffirms that Member States have the primary responsibility to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. It sends a clear message that terrorism is unacceptable in all its forms and manifestations, and that Member States have resolved to take practical steps, individually and collectively, to prevent and combat terrorism. Those practical steps include a wide array of measures ranging from strengthening Member States' capacity to counter terrorist threats to better coordinating the United Nations System's counter-terrorism architecture and activities.

Pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy include:

1. *Measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.*
2. *Measures to prevent and combat terrorism.*
3. *Measures to build States' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in that regard.*
4. *Measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental*

*basis of the fight against terrorism.*

United Nations Office on Counter Terrorism (UNOCT) conducts quarterly briefings to member states on the threats and landscape of terrorism. During the Third UNOCT Quarterly Briefing to Member States of 2023, held on 11 December, some of the key points raised by speakers included:

The global terrorism threat landscape includes 1) The alarming threat posed by Al-Qaida and Da'esh in conflict zones and neighboring countries, including in some parts of Africa, where environmental crises, poverty, weak governance, and human rights abuses compound the threat of terrorism; 2) The significant threat presented by Da'esh in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria; 3) The increasingly diverse and fragmented nature of the terrorism threat landscape, including the rising global threat from terrorism based on xenophobia, racism, or other forms of intolerance, or in the name of religion or belief; 4) Increasing incidents of lone actors and self-radicalized individuals carrying out attacks; 5) Worrying trends related to the use of new technologies for terrorist purposes, including terrorism financing; and 6) The need for ongoing monitoring and analysis to understand emerging trends and threats in different regions.

During the brief, a crucial area highlighted was *combatting organized, emerging and transnational crime* with a particular focus on the nexus with terrorism, including through *facilitating more effective law enforcement cooperation between Member States.*

Reference: <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/un-global-counter->





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photo: psmnews.mv

ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වීමත් සමඟම ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වී ඇත. මෙයට හේතු වන්නේ ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වීමයි. ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වීමත් සමඟම ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වී ඇත. මෙයට හේතු වන්නේ ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වීමයි.

ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වීමත් සමඟම ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වී ඇත. මෙයට හේතු වන්නේ ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වීමයි. ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වීමත් සමඟම ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වී ඇත. මෙයට හේතු වන්නේ ජනතාවගේ අවධානය යොමු වීමයි.

HAPPY  
2024  
NEW YEAR

ආශ්ච්ඡිත වර්ෂයකට පිවිසීමට පිටිමු!  
ආශ්ච්ඡිත වර්ෂයකට පිවිසීමට පිටිමු!  
ආශ්ච්ඡිත වර්ෂයකට පිවිසීමට පිටිමු!

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