



**Title:**

Counterterrorism, Sanctions and Principled Humanitarian Action in the COVID-19 response

**Sponsors and Organizers:**

NRC, Save the Children, EU, Belgium, Switzerland

**Date and Time:**

Thursday 11 June from 1-2.30pm

This is one of the side-events to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS), which builds on this year's HAS theme: *“Reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations: taking action for people-centred solutions, strengthening effectiveness, respecting international humanitarian law and promoting the humanitarian principles”*.

**Background and objectives**

This event will look at the impact of counterterrorism and sanctions measures on principled humanitarian action in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. The panel will explore the daily operational challenges faced by humanitarian organisations as they carry out their work, as echoed in a growing body of research. These include, though are not limited to, difficulties to the independent selection of beneficiaries, to carrying out bank transfers, to engagement with non-state armed groups and to the provision of healthcare to people in need in sanctioned jurisdictions.

The need to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic has brought new urgency to these issues as pre-existing constraints in parts of the world, despite joint efforts undertaken by donors, can hinder the response. This event links strongly with the ECOSOC HAS 2020 theme of “Reinforcing humanitarian assistance in the context of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations”.

The event will discuss the need to reaffirm the fundamental importance of the humanitarian principles and to ensure that counter-terrorism measures and sanctions do not weaken adherence to them. It will seek to identify

ways to ensure that such measures are consistent with Member State obligations under International Humanitarian Law, ensuring people-centered solutions and strengthening effectiveness.

### **Discussion points**

- What is the impact of counterterrorism and sanctions measures on humanitarian action? How are the pre-existing challenges affecting the humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How can we explain and depart from the tension between obligations under international law to allow humanitarian access and counterterrorism and sanctions measures?
- Has the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2462 (2019) influenced the behaviour of international actors with regards to the potential effect of counter terrorism measures?
- What steps are taken by humanitarian actors to monitor and mitigate the risks that may arise from the need to comply with counterterrorism and sanctions measures?
- What are possible operational, legal or policy solutions to address these challenges?

### **Key concrete action points and recommendations/take away messages**

- Participants will better understand the risks to humanitarian action in the face of global counterterrorism and sanctions-related environment, including how these measures may be affecting the global effort to respond to COVID-19.
- Participants will have an understanding of steps they can take to monitor and mitigate the risks to their organisations.
- Speakers will provide concrete avenues for Member States, the UN and humanitarian actors to protect principled humanitarian action in an increasingly challenging environment.

### **Format**

A virtual panel debate moderated by the European Union (EU) with opening remarks by Belgium and

- a presentation by Save the Children work of the challenges faced by a humanitarian INGO with counterterrorism and sanctions measures, and proposals of operational and policy suggestions relevant for donors and a NY level audience
- a presentation by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) on their new Risk Management Toolkit for Counterterrorism Measures as a concrete operational solution.

- a presentation by the “Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism” on the tension between legal regimes, the creation of 'CT law' and the institutional balances within the UN architecture.
- a presentation by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) on their perspective.

Questions and comments, discussion.

Closing remarks by Switzerland.

### **Chair and moderator**

Chair and moderator Ms Mihela Zupancic, Head of Unit, International and Inter-institutional Relations, Legal Framework, Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG-ECHO), European Commission.

Opening remarks by H.E. Mr. Jeroen Cooreman, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations.

Closing remarks by H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations

### **Panel composition**

Emma O’Leary – Senior Humanitarian Policy Advisor, Norwegian Refugee Council.

Gabriella Waaijman – Humanitarian Director, Save the Children.

Fionnuala Ní Aoláin – Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.

Marc Porret – Legal and Criminal Justice Coordinator Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED).

### **Background Material**

- Humanitarian Engagement under counter-terrorism <https://pilac.law.harvard.edu/pilot-empirical-survey-study-and-comment>
- Counterterrorism and Humanitarian Action: Will 2020 Be a Turning Point for International Humanitarian Law at the United Nations? <https://www.lawfareblog.com/counterterrorism-and-humanitarian-action-will-2020-be-turning-point-international-humanitarian-law>

- Dr. Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF, IHL & Counter-Terrorism: Tensions and Challenges for Medical Humanitarian Organizations: <http://msf-analysis.org/ihl-counter-terrorism-tensions-challenges-medical-humanitarian-organizations>
- Report 2018 “Principles under Pressure: the impact of counterterrorism measures and preventing/countering violent extremism on principled humanitarian action”: [https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/principles-under-pressure/nrc-principles\\_under\\_pressure-report-2018-screen.pdf](https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/principles-under-pressure/nrc-principles_under_pressure-report-2018-screen.pdf)
- Report March 2020 <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/practical-guide-project-cycle-management-and-counterterrorism-risks/>
- NRC Opinion April 2020, “Review sanction regimes to facilitate Covid-19 response”: <https://www.nrc.no/news/2020/april/review-sanction-regimes-to-facilitate-covid-19-response/>
- 2017, Recommendations for Reducing Tensions in the Interplay Between Sanctions, Counterterrorism Measures and Humanitarian Action: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/recommendations-reducing-tensions-interplay-between-sanctions-counterterrorism-measures>
- Nathalie Weizman, « Painting Within the Lines: The UN’s Newest Resolution Criminalizing Financing for Terrorists—Without Imperiling Humanitarian Activities”: <https://www.justsecurity.org/63442/painting-within-the-lines-the-uns-newest-resolution-criminalizing-financing-for-terrorists-without-imperiling-humanitarian-activities/>
- Making Sanctions Smarter: Safeguarding Humanitarian Action: <https://www.ipinst.org/2019/12/making-sanctions-smarter-safeguarding-humanitarian-action>

**Connection details to join the event**

RSVP [here](#), call details to follow.

**Contact**

For more information, please contact:

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