Counter-terrorism measures and principled humanitarian action

OCHA

Friday 19 June 2015, 12:30 – 2:30 pm

OCHA

Room XXIV, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

This is one of the side-events to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year’s theme: The future of humanitarian affairs: towards greater inclusiveness, coordination, interoperability and effectiveness.

Background and objectives

During the past decade, the UN Security Council and many Member States have adopted or expanded counter-terrorism measures. In some cases, this has impeded the delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance to people in need. For humanitarian actors to be able to reach people in need, it is essential that their activities be exclusively humanitarian in nature and comply with the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and that they be perceived as doing so. An enhanced dialogue between humanitarian organizations, Member States and the UN is needed to better reconcile the implementation of counter-terrorism measures with the ability of humanitarian organizations to respond to humanitarian needs in a timely and principled manner and in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The objective of this side event is to reflect on the challenges that humanitarian organizations face in delivering principled humanitarian assistance to people in need whilst complying with counter-terrorism measures, and to identify concrete measures that could facilitate this task. This should include discussing how best to ensure that humanitarian assistance does not inadvertently support any party to conflict, including designated terrorist groups, as well as discussing the possible inclusion of humanitarian exemptions in sanctions and counter-terrorism regimes.

Discussion points
Against this backdrop, the side-event will focus on the following suggested questions:

1. What are the main risks and challenges that humanitarian organizations face in delivering principled humanitarian assistance to people in need whilst also complying with applicable counter-terrorism measures?
2. What steps could be taken to mitigate the negative impact of counter-terrorism measures on principled humanitarian action; e.g., the inclusion of humanitarian exemptions in sanctions and counter-terrorism regimes?
3. What measures should the humanitarian community take to minimize risk, in particular with respect to aid manipulation and diversion?

Intended outcomes/conclusions/recommendations
If available
Format
Panel discussion with interactive dialogue.

Chair and Moderator:
• Ms. Naz K. Modirzadeh, Director, Harvard Law School Program on International Law & Armed Conflict

Panel composition:
• Mr. Mark Bowden: UN Deputy Special Representative and RC/HC for Afghanistan
• Dr. Hany El-Banna OBE: Chairman of the Muslim Charities Forum and Founder of Islamic Relief
• Ms. Elizabeth Campbell, Senior Humanitarian Policy Advisor, US Department of State/Bureau of International Organization Affairs

Background Material
“Impact of Donor Counter-Terrorism Measures on Principled Humanitarian Action”, July 2013
http://www.unocha.org/node/32674

“Counter-terrorism law and regulations, what aid agencies need to know”, November 2014

“International Counterterrorism Efforts: An Initial Mapping”, February 2015
http://pilac.law.harvard.edu/international-counterterrorism-efforts-index#index-of-international-counterterrorism-efforts

Other useful resources: http://pilac.law.harvard.edu/counterterrorism-and-humanitarian-engagement-project/

Contact
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