

Children, Victims of Terrorism

The continued crises in today's world, has put Mankind against a difficult challenge. The terrible events of the recent years, have imposed new phenomena on Mankind and human rights, which are all against human standards, and are deemed as human rights violations. One of these important problems which is the direct result of the terrorism crisis, is the use of children for terror and extremist objectives.

Each year thousands of children are exploited as military tools. The issue of the terror groups and children has displayed a new dimension of human rights violations in Mankind's modern era in an unprecedented way.

As the most defenceless victims of crimes against humanity in the terrorism crisis, children have endured many sufferings in the recent years. The use of children in executing terror objectives and their exploitation by terrorists have been in various forms in these years.

Child victims of terror do not fight on frontlines, but on the frontline of terror, shoulder to shoulder with terror groups carry out suicide attacks or execute prisoners. Sometimes these children are abducted from their families as captives or booties of war, and or in most instances themselves in the terrorist families, step in their parents' shoes with extremist ideologies.

Another group are youths from ordinary and mostly grown up in socially well-to-do families in Europe and or other countries, and are introduced to terror groups via the internet and get drawn into their extremist ideologies.

These youths leave their homes and countries and seek refuge in extremist ideologies.

The extremist violence that these terror groups drill into these children, at times leads them to the slaughter and execution of their parents.

Children recruited and exploited by terrorist and violent extremist groups:

In the recent decade, we have been faced with two groups and very similar approaches parallel to each other in the nurturing of terroristic ideologies, where children are selected for the future generation of extremism and terror. And despite international

community and the UN's warnings, governments avoid dealing with the problem, many governments refrain from calling these groups as terror groups.

These two approaches in the nurturing of a new generation of children for terror objectives have been in two overall forms: a) Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the exploitation of children, b) ISIS and its different approaches in the exploitation of children for terrorism.

a) Taliban and Al-Qaeda Extremist Schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan

With Al-Qaeda becoming powerful in Afghanistan, paying vast amounts of money, for the first time groups linked to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban created schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan to promote extremist ideologies. To escape poverty and receive finances and at times provision of security for their families, many children in Afghanistan and Pakistan have entered extremist training workshops, and through brainwashing and belief in extremist ideologies, they have joined the abhorrent terror nurturing movement and this process still continues even with the fall of Taliban and the vast financial resources of these groups.

b) ISIS and the New Approach in the Exploitation of Children

1 – Through control of vast regions in Iraq and Syria, ISIS has created a new approach in exploitation of children. Child victims of ISIS extremism are forcefully abducted from their families and in ISIS camps are training for suicide and terror attacks. Most children work in ISIS bomb making workshops.

2 – Another group of children are those whose parents are members of ISIS and they enter their children to terrorist training camps to learn terror operations, and they are encouraged to carry out terror attacks. And at times see their children off for carrying out suicide operations.

3 – The third group are youths who through online propaganda of extremist groups, have declared loyalty to ISIS from all corners of the world, and they are usually recruited to learn terror operations from different countries in the world.

“In their propaganda, Isis has often shown that they train these minors to become the next generation of foreign terrorist fighters, which may pose a future security threat to member states,” the Europol report said. “Some returnees will perpetuate the terrorist threat to the EU via facilitation, fundraising, recruitment and radicalization activities. They may also serve as role models for future would-be violent jihadists.”

More than 50 children from the UK are living in the “caliphate”, where there are also an estimated 31,000 pregnant women, an investigation by the Quilliam Foundation found earlier this year.

Analysts say Isis leaders see the children as crucial to secure the group’s long-term success and consider them better and more lethal fighters because of their indoctrination and desensitisation since birth.

The deadly impact of foreign training has been seen in recent terror attacks, with several of the Paris and Brussels gunmen having combat experience in Syria. Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently, an activist group that documents Isis atrocities, raised concern that even if Isis is defeated, its young recruits could continue bloody attempts to establish a brutal caliphate, calling them a “lost generation”.

Also according to the report of the Child Soldiers International:

Many delegates argued that in some contemporary armed conflicts, the scale and methods of child recruitment represent a new trend. They observed that groups such as “Islamic State” and Boko Haram are increasingly recruiting children as a deliberate tactic. This not only boosts military strength, but is also a long-term strategy to control populations by raising future generations of loyal adherents, and thus consolidate control over territory. Several delegates also emphasized the growing use of social media to target children for recruitment, and increasingly sophisticated psychological methods used to groom, indoctrinate and train them.

On the other hand, it was acknowledged that recruitment by “extremist” groups is also driven by socioeconomic factors that drive recruitment in many contexts, such as the prevalence of armed conflict, poverty, lack of access to education and social exclusion as a result of governance failures.

Delegates acknowledged the need to do more to

prevent child recruitment, discussing efforts already underway in several states. Speakers noted that such initiatives needed to be handled with great care, as targeting groups or individuals identified as being at particular risk can lead to social stigmatization, potentially reinforcing feelings of discrimination that can contribute to recruitment in the first place.

Surely, putting an end to the growth and promotion of violence of the extremism and terrorist kind is a universal duty and above all side takins. But some governments in the world have repeatedly shrugged any responsibility towards this and other human crises, and with indifference and accusation of each other, have forgotten the sensitive issues of today’s world.

Evidence to this claim is the extensive propaganda of ISIS on the internet and television, which is easily accessible to the people in the region and the world. And terrorists through complete freedom in television and satellite propaganda promote their ideologies. These groups easily use satellites that are under the control of some governments.

Despite all warnings, reports and concerns towards the situation and the dangerous future that the world will continually face the extremism problem, governments have a political approach and consider their short term interests, and often forget that today’s inter-connected world cannot be guided through irresponsible political approaches and behaviours.

And at times it is forgotten that the inter-connected world of today cannot be guided to an acceptable outcome through irresponsible political approaches. The leverage use of terrorism by government surely will not be able to help to reach their short term objectives; because in the inter-connected world any action will bring about an appropriate reaction. The violation of human rights and support and nurture of violence, will expand violence, and this violence will dwell in its created base and will rapidly reach all corners of the world. Efforts to reach a sustainable peace for all in the first place, and then cooperation in the elimination of all forms of extremism and ultimately reaching sustainable development in education and training, are the initial steps in the fight against terrorism and the fight for children who are the first victims, and this fight and endeavour to halt and end this process can only be done through international cooperation.