

Countering the Narratives and Ideologies of Terrorism

Statement of H.E. Nazifullah Salarzai Minister, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the United Nations

At the Security Council Open Debate on “Countering the Narratives and Ideologies of Terrorism”

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Thank you Mr. President.

I would like to thank Egypt for its leadership of the Council this month, and for organizing this important debate. Afghanistan aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait on behalf of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Mr. President,

Let me be brief and to the point. Much was discussed during the day about the internal factors to do with countering the narratives and ideologies of terrorism. While we agree with most of what's been said, let me focus on the external factors in case of Afghanistan and remind this Council that the creation of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 1994 opened the current tragic chapter of terrorism in the world. Before the crafting of the Taliban, terror in its current behavior and form was little known to the world. The Taliban came into existence before groups like Al-Qaida, Al-Shabab, Boko Haram and Daish gained notoriety. In a way, it was the Taliban and their backers who characterized the kind of terror that we witness today from various violent extremist groups.

Mr. President,

In the current global climate of unspeakable brutality committed by these terrorist outfits, let us not forget that it was the Taliban who stoned women to death; it was the Taliban who closed girls' schools, thereby denying millions of girls from their right to education; it was the Taliban who prevented women from pursuing a livelihood; it was them who introduced suicide attacks on civilians and destroyed towns and villages in Afghanistan. One can easily trace how the Taliban, with foreign support, started promoting Al-Qaida, Daish, and their type of divisive and hateful ideology.

Since the Taliban mushroomed overnight in the landscape of Afghanistan, our entire population has been brutalized in their hands. The latest attack came three weeks ago, where an indiscriminate brutal bombing in Kabul led to the death of 68 people and wounded 350. But their vicious bloodlust has never been limited to Afghanistan. Let us not forget that it was under the Taliban that Afghanistan became the jumping board for international terrorism, when thousands of young men received training and logistical support in terrorist camps. This was the precursor of today's terrorists carrying out deadly attacks in Asia, Europe, U.S, Middle East, Africa and elsewhere.

So the question is how and why did the Taliban come into being? We need to ask ourselves how did they learn to drive tanks and fly jets overnight, stage conventional warfare, and capitalize on prolonged political conflict in our country? Who trained them? Who provided them with supplies? Who financed them? Who provided them with safe havens and orchestrated their spring offensives year after year?

Religious outfits and sloganism, as well as taking advantage of the weaknesses emerging from the prolonged conflict in Afghanistan were the cheapest and easiest ways to recruit for the ranks and files of the Taliban. In this case, ideology and violent behavior were used in pursuit of political objectives by circles within state structures outside of our frontiers.

The question should be what motivated and still continues to motivate these circles to use violence through proxies in pursuit of political objectives at national, regional, and global levels? Three causes can be identified: 1) negative state rivalry in the region with excessive anxiety and suspicion of one state over the other, resulting in adoption of wrong policies; 2) tension between military and civilian control in politics, an inherent struggle emerging from militarism in society; and 3) states' trust deficit that prevents constructive dialogue. Hence, in our case, it is not the ideology but the initiation, enabling, and facilitation role of political actors and their use of radical ideology for short term gains that need to be addressed. Targeting the promoters and drivers of such policies, who use violence in pursuit of political objectives within the state structures, especially in the security apparatus, is absolutely crucial to deal with the threats of violent extremism. In this regard, it must be mentioned that differentiation between good and bad terrorists by few actors is futile since terrorism in all forms is inherently appalling and must be condemned.

Mr. President,

In Afghanistan, we have witnessed how terrorists and violent extremist groups take advantage of prolonged and unresolved conflicts, lack of minimal peace and security, and most importantly, of negative competition between states to push forward their brutal agenda. The world today is in dire need of reducing state rivalries and addressing trust deficits. In this regard, regional countries and international actors bear particular responsibility for assisting countries in strife in returning to peace.

In conclusion, Afghanistan reiterates its commitment to engage constructively with the United Nations and other international partners to discuss counter-terrorism measures, including the upcoming bi-annual review of the Global Counter Terrorism strategy. We hope to achieve tangible results at the end of the review process.

Thank you Mr. President.

