

## **Committee/Council: Special Conference**

### **Issue: Combatting state terrorism**

**Student Officer: Chrysa Pierakea**

**Position: President**

## **Introduction**

Most of the problems the international community is trying to solve are difficult due to their complex political, economic, and social nature. When it comes to state terrorism, the people trying to find ways to combat this issue have to face another challenge, namely the fact that many countries, organizations and experts on the issue do not even recognize that state terrorism exists. Thus, in order to address this issue, the first question that should be answered is whether or not a state can conduct terrorism or whether terrorism only applies to non-state agents.

Another challenging issue is the question of financing terrorism and whether or not this action should be considered state terrorism. In a time when terrorism has grown to be one of the biggest concerns of the international community, making headlines almost every day and spreading fear and insecurity to the majority of the population all around the globe, it is of outmost importance to find a way to combat it. Nevertheless, in order to do such a thing, the UN member states should firstly agree on what a terrorist act is and who can actually carry out terrorist acts. This brings us to the most challenging problem we face while trying to solve the issue of state terrorism, namely the lack of a proper definition of terrorism by the UN, on which I will elaborate in later sections of this study guide.

How can the international community decide on the matter of state terrorism and combat it, if an official definition of terrorism does not exist? Thus, it is clear enough that combatting state terrorism requires before anything else an articulate definition of the term by the UN. Then in order to overcome all the obstacles that will stand in the way of solving this both complex and crucial problem, the cooperation of all member states is needed.



## Definition of Key-Terms

### Terrorism

The official statement of the United Nations about defining terrorism is the following: *"The United Nations ability to develop a comprehensive strategy has been constrained by the inability of Member States to agree on an anti-terrorism convention including a definition of terrorism. This prevents the United Nations from exerting its moral authority and from sending an unequivocal message that terrorism is never an acceptable tactic, even for the most defensible of causes."*

The Merriam Webster lexicon defines terrorism as "the systematic use of terror especially as a means of coercion".

### State terrorism

State terrorism is a form of terrorism conducted by a state and targeting other states, civilians of other countries or even civilians of the same state. State terrorism can have many forms. Some experts argue that financing terrorist organizations or rebels with the goal of destabilizing the governments of other countries can also be considered state terrorism.

### Privacy

According to the Merriam Webster lexicon, privacy means: a) the quality or state of being apart from company or observation, b) freedom from unauthorized intrusion.

### Financing

Financing is defined as the act or process or an instance of raising or providing funds; also, as the funds thus raised or provided. (Merriam Webster lexicon)

### Security

Security means the quality or state of being secure such as:

- a) freedom from danger,
- b) freedom from fear or anxiety,
- c) freedom from the prospect of being laid off. (Merriam Webster lexicon)

## Background Information

As mentioned before, a definition of terrorism or state terrorism recognized by the United Nations does not exist. Thus, what is actually considered state terrorism varies from country to country. Some experts argue that someone can identify a terrorist state only if the said state carries out terrorism regularly and intentionally. For example, the Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union could be considered as terrorist states. However, it is extremely hard to verify one state's intentions and prove that



the violent acts were carried out for the purpose of harming citizens and not in the context of war or self-defense. Furthermore, it is interesting that some researchers define totalitarian states as terrorist ones, because they deprive their own citizens of their human rights and freedom in order to have them under control.

The financing of terrorism is also a crucial issue. Does the financing of terrorism fall under the category of state terrorism? Some experts think it does. Nevertheless, how can we prove that one country is financing a terrorist organization? And what about the organizations that are considered as terrorist organizations by some countries and not by others? The questions that arise are many. Moreover, this issue becomes more complex if someone takes into consideration that, in essence, most countries accused of state terrorism, are being charged of giving money and resources to terrorist organizations, something that falls under the category of financing terrorism.

One of the biggest issues that hindered the United Nations in combating state terrorism is the fact that sometimes an organization that is thought to be a terrorist one from one state, is described as "freedom fighters" from the other. This difference in perception is due to the divergent interests that both states have, which leads them to defining a group in different ways. Thus, it is important to have a universally accepted definition of this term in order to be able to solve the issue.

It is thus understandable that state terrorism means terrorism that is conducted from one state to harm the citizens of another state or even its own citizens in order

to spread fear or achieve other goals, like gaining profit or political power. As far as the international community is concerned, this could be the basis for defining the term more specifically and solving all the issues that arise from terrorism.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

In this section, some of the major states that have been accused of terrorism were mentioned briefly. The fact that these accusations are not “proven” should be taken into consideration.

### Russia

Many countries and experts argue that Russia's direct and indirect involvement in the eastern Ukraine hostilities could be characterized as state-sponsored terrorism. This is also the reason why Ukraine has accused Russia for financing terrorism at the ICJ (International Court of Justice). Specifically, Russia is accused by Ukraine and countries, such as the USA (United States of America), for not only financing extremist groups that are categorized as terrorist groups but also providing them with resources and soldiers. On the other hand, the Russian Federation defines these groups as freedom fighters and argues that it only provides them with humanitarian aid.



### Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has been accused by several states, such as Iran, for supporting Islamic extremists in the Middle East with money and other resources. Saudi Arabians who accused Iran as the perpetrator of such actions denied this claim.

### Iran

Iran has been accused of financing, training and arming Hezbollah and other Shiite forces in Syria. Furthermore, Iran has also allegedly provided weapons, training and funding to Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups according to the US State Department.

### United States

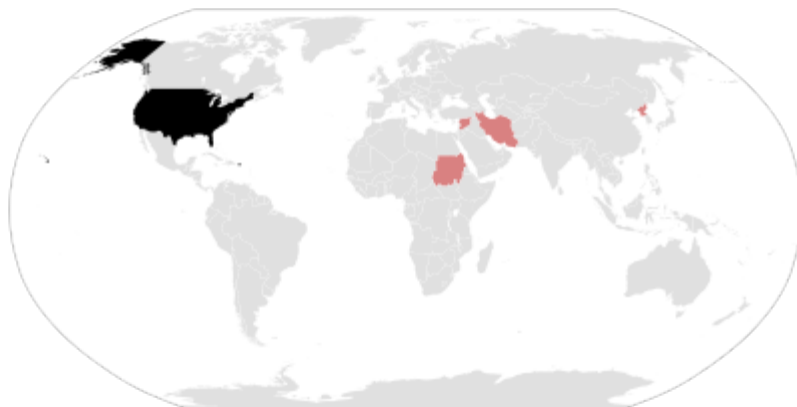
USA has been accused numerous times of conducting state terrorism by supporting non-state actors in countries, such as Afghanistan and Syria that are disrupting the states peace, by overthrowing the current regime and intervening in the politics of countries, such as Vietnam, by sending armed forces and using methods, such as Agent Orange to attack citizens. An accusation made by the Turkish government is that of arming and training a Kurdish political and fighting force in Syria named People's Protection Units.

### Turkey

Turkey is a country full of conflicts and contradictions. One of the reasons why some tend to accuse lately Turkey of terrorism actions is the way the government treats the Kurdish population. Kurds in Turkey have been victims of persistent assaults on their ethnic, cultural, religious identity and economic and political status by successive Turkish governments, despite the fact that they are Turkey's fourth largest ethnic group. This could be characterized as a form of state terrorism against Turkey's own citizens.

### United States Department of State

The United States Department of State has officially named some countries as sponsors of terrorism accusing them of "repeatedly providing support for acts of international terrorism". At the picture below, the pink color marks the countries that were recognized as terrorist countries and the black color the United States of America.



## Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

All the treaties or resolutions ratified by the UN on the topic pertain to a specific type of terrorism and do not provide a general definition of the term. Furthermore, the common pattern is that none of these legal documents face the issue of state terrorism. More specifically, they only treat the members states as allies to solve the issue of terrorism and not as possible predators.

The 1963 Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed On Board Aircraft

The 1970 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft

The 1971 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation

The 1979 Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material

The 1988 Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation

The 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation

The 1988 Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf

The 1991 Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Identification

The 1997 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings

The 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism

The 2005 International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The first attempt of the international community to define terrorism and battle against it was made by the League of Nations' Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism in 1937. This convention was never applied, but it is still interesting to see how these people tried to solve the problem of the definition of such a term in a time of great conflicts. Therefore, this is an extract of the first articles of the Convention in order to understand it better:

*1. Any willful act causing death or grievous bodily harm or loss of liberty to:*

*a) Heads of State, persons exercising the prerogatives of the head of the State, their hereditary or designated successors;*

*b) The wives or husbands or the above-mentioned persons;*

*c) Persons charged with public functions or holding public positions when the act is directed against them in their public capacity.*

*2. Willful destruction of, or damage to, public property or property devoted to a public purpose belonging to or subject to the authority of another High Contracting Party.*

*3. Any willful act calculated to endanger the lives of members of the public.*

*4. Any attempt to commit an offence falling within the foregoing provisions of the present article.*

*5. The manufacture, obtaining, possession, or supplying of arms, ammunition, explosives or harmful substances with the view to the commission in any country whatsoever of an offence falling within the present article.*

The second attempt to find an internationally acceptable definition was made in 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly negotiating a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. The hereunder definition, which, although was never put into practice, was the closest thing that we ever had for defining terrorism. The definition reads as follows:

*1. Any person commits an offence within the meaning of this Convention if that person, by any means, unlawfully and intentionally, causes:*

*(a) Death or serious bodily injury to any person; or*

*(b) Serious damage to public or private property, including a place of public use, a State or government facility, a public transportation system, an infrastructure facility or the environment; or*

*(c) Damage to property, places, facilities, or systems referred to in paragraph 1 (b) of this article, resulting or likely to result in major economic loss, when the purpose of the conduct, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a*

*population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act.*

## Possible Solutions

The first step in order to combat this issue is to define the key terms and most importantly the term "state terrorism". This could be the basis for further discussions on the issue itself. Agreeing on what terrorism is and on who can be characterized as a terrorist is vital. What is the difference between state violence and state terrorism? What is the difference between terrorism and state terrorism? These questions and many more should be considered during the discussions towards a resolution to properly define the terms and address the issue as a whole.

Furthermore, the absence of legal grounds about state terrorism should be highlighted. A legal framework protecting the decisions of the United Nations and ensuring that every state will do what was agreed is vital.

Last but not least, the sanctions against a state, which violates the agreements and treaties or conducts state terrorism should be discussed. The punishment must be proportionate to the crime· thus, different kinds of punishment should be discussed and decided.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the fact that, despite the complexity of the issue, if every state has a good will and is ready to cooperate with the international community in the war against terrorism, a solution can and will be found through fruitful dialogue.





## Bibliography

U. S. *Department of State*, U.S. Department of State,  
[www.state.gov/j/ct/list/c14151.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/ct/list/c14151.htm).

“Untitled Document.” *United Nations*, United Nations,  
[www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/terrorism/sg%20high-level%20panel%20report-terrorism.htm](http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/terrorism/sg%20high-level%20panel%20report-terrorism.htm).

“AGREED DEFINITION OF TERM 'TERRORISM' SAID TO BE NEEDED FOR  
CONSENSUS ON COMPLETING COMPREHENSIVE CONVENTION  
AGAINST IT | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.” *United Nations*,  
United Nations, [www.un.org/press/en/2005/gal3276.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2005/gal3276.doc.htm).

[http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/terrorism/CTED\\_FAQs.pdf](http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/terrorism/CTED_FAQs.pdf)

Nations, League of. “Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism.”  
*WDL RSS*, United Nations Office at Geneva Library, 16 Nov. 1937,  
[www.wdl.org/en/item/11579/](http://www.wdl.org/en/item/11579/).

“Ukraine Conflict: Russia Accused of Terrorism and Discrimination at ICJ.” *BBC  
News*, BBC, 6 Mar. 2017, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39177504](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39177504).

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264715825\\_State\\_Violence\\_as\\_State\\_Terrorism](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264715825_State_Violence_as_State_Terrorism)

<https://web.archive.org/web/20080512021205/https://eprints.unimelb.edu.au/archive/00000137/01/Primorat.pdf>

Board, The Editorial. “Fighting, While Funding, Extremists.” *The New York Times*,  
The New York Times, 19 June 2017, [www.nytimes.com/2017/06/19/opinion/saudi-arabia-qatar-isis-terrorism.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/19/opinion/saudi-arabia-qatar-isis-terrorism.html).

Mortimer, Caroline. “Saudi Arabia 'Has Ties to Terror across Middle East and West',  
Iran Says.” *The Independent*, Independent Digital News and Media, 14 June 2017,  
[www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-terrorism-ties-iran-middle-east-west-javad-zarif-sunni-militants-wahabi-baluchistan-a7789261.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-terrorism-ties-iran-middle-east-west-javad-zarif-sunni-militants-wahabi-baluchistan-a7789261.html).

“Kurdish Repression in Turkey.” *Cultural Survival*,  
[www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/kurdish-repression-turkey](http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/kurdish-repression-turkey).

Al Jazeera. “Russia, Turkey: US Supporting Syria 'Terrorist' Groups.” *Israeli–Palestinian Conflict* / *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 28 Dec. 2016,  
[www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/russia-turkey-syria-161228050019245.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/russia-turkey-syria-161228050019245.html).