

## Office of Legal Affairs (OLA)

**Location:**

New York, USA

**Contact Information:**

Office of Legal Affairs

Codification Division

United Nations, Room M-13078

New York, NY 10017

USA

**Focal Points:**

Mr. Trevor Chimimba

Senior Legal Officer, Codification Division

Tel: +1 917 963 0350

E-mail: [chimimba@un.org](mailto:chimimba@un.org)

Ms. Mona Khalil

Senior Legal Officer, Office of Legal Counsel

Tel: +1 917 367 4496

E-mail: [khalil36@un.org](mailto:khalil36@un.org)

**Year of Establishment:** 1946

**Website:** [www.un.org/en/law/](http://www.un.org/en/law/)

**CTITF Working Group Membership:**

- Protecting Human Rights While Countering Terrorism
- Border Management Related to Counter-Terrorism
- Supporting and Highlighting Victims of Terrorism

The Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) of the United Nations Secretariat provides unified central legal services for UN headquarters and other organs of the United Nations. Pursuant to Article 102 of the UN Charter, OLA registers, publishes, and serves as a depository of international treaties. OLA also promotes the strengthening, development, and codification of international public and trade law, as well as the international legal order for the seas and oceans. The office is organized into organizational units working towards these objectives—namely, the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, Office of the Legal Counsel, General Legal Division, Codification Division, Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, International Trade Law Division (Vienna), and the Treaty Section. The Under-Secretary-General of the OLA is also the legal council of the United Nations.<sup>143</sup>

The first international counterterrorism instrument was adopted in 1963 under the auspices of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The UN General Assembly had been involved in counterterrorism issues since the early 1970s, and the legal framework addressing international terrorism has developed significantly since. Today there are fourteen universal counterterrorism instruments and four amendments addressing terrorism adopted under the auspices of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.<sup>144</sup> The Secretary-General currently serves as a depository for five universal counterterrorism instruments. The UN Security Council has also adopted a number of legally binding resolutions relevant to addressing international terrorism.

OLA provides legal assistance to UN bodies working on counterterrorism and briefings on relevant issues of international law. In particular, OLA has been assisting the Al-Qaida Sanctions Monitoring Committee (formerly Al Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee or the 1267 Committee) to address some due-process concerns regarding the listing and de-listing of individuals on the sanctions list.<sup>145</sup>

OLA also provides substantive services to the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly and the Ad Hoc Committee, established by the General Assembly in resolution 51/210 (1996), primarily to further develop a comprehensive legal framework of conventions dealing with international terrorism,<sup>146</sup> and thereafter to consider the elaboration of

a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. It was through the work of the Sixth Committee that the *1994 Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism*, together with its 1996 supplement, was first elaborated.<sup>147</sup> Since 2000, the Ad Hoc Committee has held an annual two-week sessions and the Sixth Committee, in the framework of a working group, have been elaborating a comprehensive convention against international terrorism throughout the rest of the year during the regular sessions of the General Assembly, but these efforts have been delayed because of some outstanding issues surrounding the draft convention.

Negotiations over an international comprehensive convention against terrorism are ongoing, despite reinvigorated multilateral efforts following the September 11th attacks, because states continue to disagree over a few key issues: the unresolved question of the definition of terrorism, the scope of the convention (differentiating between terrorism and resistance of foreign occupation/right of peoples to self-determination), the relationship of the comprehensive convention to existing and future counterterrorism treaties,<sup>148</sup> and the inclusion of “state terrorism” in the convention, which some states argue is not adequately covered by international humanitarian law.<sup>149</sup>

OLA, through its Codification Division, publishes a number of publications, including *International Instruments Related to the Prevention and Suppression of International Terrorism* and, under its Legislative Series, *National Laws and Regulations on the Prevention and Suppression of International Terrorism*. OLA disseminates information pertaining to the various treaties primarily through the activities of its Treaty Section.<sup>150</sup> Through its annual treaty event, the Treaty Section has been responsible for encouraging states to become party to the relevant international treaties, including on the prevention and suppression of international terrorism. Training programs and seminars for delegates and government officials are also conducted on treaty practice.<sup>151</sup>

Additionally, given OLA’s role as the Secretariat to the 1982 United Nations *Convention on the Laws of the Sea*, with a division dedicated to this area, OLA has taken a role in strengthening states’ legal frameworks for addressing maritime security issues, which now include threats posed by transnational terrorists and other armed

groups. OLA offers information and legal assistance to states to strengthen maritime security and convenes conferences and meetings to facilitate a discussion among states on this issue.

As a member of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, OLA participates in the Working Groups on Protecting Human Rights While Countering Terrorism, Supporting and Highlighting Victims of Terrorism, as well as the Working Group on Border Management Related to Counter-Terrorism.