

Department of Public Information (DPI)

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Year of Establishment: 1946

CTITF Working Group Membership:

- Preventing and Resolving Conflicts
- Countering the Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes
- Preventing and Responding to WMD Terrorist Attacks
- Supporting and Highlighting Victims of Terrorism

The Department of Public Information (DPI) serves as the public face of the United Nations and works with its constituent bodies, partners, nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions, and the media to ensure that its core values and messages are conveyed to the broader public. To fulfill this function, DPI manages a global network of UN information centers (UNIC) that disseminate UN news throughout the world. Additionally, DPI manages the UN website (www.un.org), UN Radio, the UN News Center, and UN Television. DPI also works with UN bodies to produce a myriad of publications.

In this role, DPI is also responsible for publicizing the work of the United Nations on countering terrorism. It maintains the website www.un.org/terrorism which serves as a primary portal for online information regarding the CTITF and its activities and publications. DPI also provides communications support to the CTITF and its members, compiles the weekly news bulletin on global terrorism incidents and issues, produces videos and other publicity materials, and contributes to the formulation and implementation of a communications strategy for the world body on issues relating to terrorism.

In 2007 at the Symposium on Advancing Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Austria, a DPI official noted that

DPI's worldwide network of over 60 country offices has been disseminating information on the strategy, reaching out to their respective audiences. This global network is in fact a collection of local audiences that allows for more specific and targeted outreach which can encourage a broader support for the strategy in all geographic regions.⁴⁷

As part of its efforts to increase the understanding of UN counterterrorism efforts among member states and the general public,

DPI created a public-information work plan for the Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate from 2006 onward.⁴⁸ In targeting member states, the stated goal is to “demystify issues surrounding the Committee’s work, in particular country visits. It will emphasize that the Committee wants to assist member-states in their efforts to implement relevant Security Council resolutions to combat terrorism.”⁴⁹

To this end, DPI produced a number of fact sheets in 2006, including *The Role of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate in the International Counter-Terrorism Effort*,⁵⁰ *The Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate*,⁵¹ *Country Visits*,⁵² and *The Counter-Terrorism Committee and Human Rights*.⁵³ In addition, DPI created an information kit on the work of the CTITF in September 2010 and assists with the production of the quarterly CTITF newsletter, *The Beam*, available at www.un.org/terrorism.

DPI, through its Educational Outreach Section, has also organized a series of seminars entitled “Unlearning Intolerance,” aimed at examining different manifestations of intolerance and discussing how they can be addressed through education and access to information. Although is not a counterterrorism initiative, this is particularly salient to Pillar I of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which recognizes that “national and religious discrimination, political exclusion, [and] socio-economic marginalization” contribute to conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.⁵⁴ Issues covered by seminars to date have included anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, the role of the media, preventing genocide, editorial cartoons, and the role of art in changing attitudes towards the environment.

As a member of various working groups of the CTITF, DPI supports their work by providing guidance and advice on strategic communications and public outreach and creating related communications materials. For example, as a member of the Working Group on Preventing and Resolving Conflicts, DPI contributes to the formulation of a communications strategy and provides support to the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA). DPI also assisted the Working Group on Preventing and Responding to WMD Terrorist Attacks in the production of its reports

and is an active participant in the Working Group on Countering the Use of the Internet for Terrorist Purposes.

DPI is also actively involved in the production of a film series on repentant terrorists, produced in cooperation with the Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanction Monitoring Committee. DPI's UNTV has produced two films in 2010 and 2011. The first film, entitled *The Terrorist Who Came Home*, is based on an Algerian fighter who chose to renounce violence and rejoin mainstream society; the second film, *Second Chance for Saudi Terrorist*, focuses on the Saudi government's effort to rehabilitate former terrorists. An additional film is planned for release in 2012.⁵⁵

An effective communications strategy for the United Nations is an invaluable tool for the CTITF entities as well as the UN leadership to communicate the world body's values and comparative advantages in worldwide efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism to the broader public. The tools developed by DPI and its global reach allow it to communicate UN norms, values, and activities to global audiences.⁵⁶ Enhancing this global reach will be necessary to expand awareness of the Global Strategy, which is currently not well known outside of New York and Vienna.⁵⁷ DPI is in a unique position to develop a broad media campaign to raise awareness of the Global Strategy and promote the consensual view it is based upon.