



UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee

**Open Counter-Terrorism Committee
Briefing on “New initiatives to address the
foreign terrorist fighter challenge”**

**Speech by Thorbjørn Jagland,
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The Battle of Ideas

The fight against violent extremism presents many challenges.

One of the biggest is psychological.

We have to let go of winning – in the traditional sense.

You can't beat terrorism on a battlefield.

If this was a simple case of the stronger, richer, better-equipped adversary defeating the weaker...

...we'd have won by now.

Nor is it possible to negotiate a peace.

There is nothing we could offer these individuals and groups...

...that would ever be enough.

Because, ultimately, terror is about the primacy of an idea.

It is about one way of seeing the world.

One way of being.

And victory is suffocating every other view.

This is terrorism's power – it's resilience.

Ideas cannot be destroyed.

They outlive leaders, movements, military campaigns.

Even when an idea has been roundly denounced...

...it lingers, threatening to re-emerge when the circumstances are right.

And, in Europe in particular, look no further than anti-Semitism for proof of that.

So, we must understand that we are locked in a battle of ideas.

Not a battle with Islam:

Those who seek to justify violence and murder in the name of Allah are perverting a fundamentally peaceful faith: terror has no religion.

But a battle with dogma, ideology and propaganda.

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The question is: how do we stop this happening again?

The urge to curb liberty at times of insecurity is as old as government itself...

...and it is as tempting today as ever.

Dr Ismail Serageldin – an eminent Muslim Scholar – put it plainly.

When he came to Strasbourg to address Council of Europe member states, he said:

We were created in the wake of the Second World War...

In Europe, we have been slow to understand this.
But our nations are finally waking up to the indoctrination taking place in plain sight.

And we must, I believe, show a new self-confidence in asserting ourselves to challenge hateful ideologies...

...entering into these forgotten arenas...

...and unashamedly promoting democracy, pluralism and tolerance societies instead.

The Council of Europe is helping our members do exactly that.

We are bringing together prison and probation services from across the continent to agree new guidelines for countering radicalisation.

We know that prisons are a hot spot.

We know that the most extreme inmates can be the most sociable, causing few problems for their guards.

And we therefore know that our interventions must be intelligent.

So these guidelines will be a practical tool...

...drawing on real successes and failures from the people who deal with this every day...

...empowering their fellow prison workers to detect and deal with radicalisation...

...while putting proper focus on mentoring prisoners...

...preparing them for release...

...as well as the follow-up which takes place once they have exited the prison walls.

This work will be ready by the end of the year.

Second, we're helping our governments intervene online.

This is extremely tricky territory – it's true.

We must, at all times, protect freedom of expression as well as the right to seek information.

The Council of Europe has, in the last decade, sponsored a range of treaties to help governments get this balance right.

Today I want to highlight just one:

The Additional Protocol to our Cybercrime Convention...

