



Participants in a workshop on efforts to address radicalization in prisons pose for a group picture in Turin, Italy, September 6, 2017. Department of State

## FOCUS

### Terrorism in Foreign Prisons: Countering Recruitment

Countering terrorist recruitment in foreign prisons is an essential element of the fight against terrorism. The management of terrorist inmates is critically important because of concerns that these individuals are attracting new recruits while incarcerated or planning attacks upon their release. Those involved in high profile terrorist attacks in Barcelona, Brussels, London, Nice, and Jakarta were initially imprisoned for non-terrorist offenses and are believed to have been radicalized to violence while in jail. Many countries throughout the world are grappling with reported cases of individuals being drawn to terrorist ideology while incarcerated, and government officials have sought assistance in addressing this issue.

The State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism (CT) launched in 2016 a global initiative that included a series of workshops to help prison officials and policy makers detect and respond to prison radicalization. As part of this initiative, the CT Bureau partnered with the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law and the U.S. Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program to develop and implement four workshops that included officials from countries in the Balkans, Central, East and North Africa, and the Middle East. At these workshops prison officials highlighted the use of specialized risk assessment tools for terrorist offenders; discussed the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches for housing terrorists; and reiterated the importance of monitoring prisoners' communications and behavior.

Detecting and countering prison radicalization is best achieved when prison officials develop and implement solid management and rehabilitation policies and programs. Prison officials need to assess and classify inmates properly when they first enter a facility and thereafter regularly re-assess and re-classify them. This helps early detection of susceptibility to violent radicalization and also helps prison staff detect changes in prisoners' behavior and patterns. The housing of terrorists in prisons is significant because where and with whom inmates are placed can contribute to or mitigate their ability to recruit and influence other inmates. This can be a significant challenge as prison systems in underdeveloped nations often lack basic needs such as access to water, a functioning waste water treatment system, and larger facilities to accommodate outsized prison populations. Assessing the sophistication of the prison system is critical in determining whether a specialized prison program is the right approach. Since country contexts vary widely, all programs are custom designed.

The State Department looks forward to continuing its work with partner nations on sound prison management and rehabilitation policies and programs that can help minimize opportunities for terrorist recruitment within prisons. We are encouraging other donors to take a leading role in the rehabilitation and reintegration space given their experience in this area and share the financial burden for addressing this widespread problem.