

**Forum:** General Assembly 2

**Issue:** Effective measures to combat the financing of terrorist organisations

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*“Terrorism is a significant threat to peace and security, prosperity and people”*

*- Ban Ki Moon*

## Introduction

Terrorist organizations are a large source of conflict and violence that currently plague the world we live in today. Terrorism has rapidly become the largest issue of the 21st century due to the ramifications felt by the victims and its ability to single handedly undermine economies and destroy nations. Acts of violence have been prevalent in our world for thousands of years. Terrorism can be traced as far back as the French Revolution, where Jacobins, rulers of the land at the time, employed several actions of terrorism including mass genocide and public executions in an effort to instill fear and obedience within the public eye. Similarly, in recent years, the world has been the subject of a variety of three treacherous acts including the 9/11 attacks in New York, the Madrid Train Bombing, the attacks on Paris, and many more on a mass global scale. However, how do terrorist organizations obtain the means to carry out these acts? As explained, terrorism has the capacity to not only implicate a single nation, but the entire world as well. Money is the fuel that ignites the fire that is global terrorism.

A key facet on the global “war against terrorism” has been counteracting the financing of terrorism. The scale and severity of terrorist attacks are often directly correlated to the amount of funding received by the organizations. Despite many efforts to end terrorism, the reality is that terrorism has always had many more complexities than nations could address. The main issue that remains is and has been constant for years is funding. Funding is the lifeline of each and every terrorist organization in the world today. Money is crucial to planning attacks, obtaining arms, recruitment of terrorists, and every other nuance relevant to such groups. Without money, these organizations cannot function and do not have the means to carry out attacks. With the multiple ways that money gets funneled to these organizations, terrorists have a plethora of options available to them to consistently evade authorities and to continue operating. These sources of sponsorship allow terrorists to thrive and continue to undermine the global economic system. Therefore, addressing the issue of the financing of terrorist

organizations and taking actions to combat the sources of funding are pivotal steps that need to be taken in an effort to end global terrorism as a whole.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Terrorism

Although there is not a single universal definition for the term, according to a number of United Nations treaties and resolutions that have been passed, it has been seen that terrorism can roughly be defined as the execution of a criminal act or threatening such an act to spread fear amongst the population and thereby forcing them to obey particular commands under fear and suffering.

### Terrorist Financing

The action of providing funds to terrorist organizations for the purpose of supporting their actions and or ideology.

### Money Laundering

The act by which illicit funds are made to appear legitimate through operations that jeopardize international security and sovereignty.

### Shell Companies

An illegitimate company used as a method for various financial actions to occur, such as money laundering, which is used in another way in the future.

### Asset Freezing

An action taken to intercept illegal funds or other assets that would be used in a negative way. Governments frequently use this method to limit the transferring of funds used for terrorist organizations

### Typologies

The study of methods, techniques, and trends of money laundering and terrorist financing.

## Background Information

The challenges of terrorist financing are often over simplified and present many more diverse challenges with the changing landscape of the current world. Terrorism is never constant and information found one day could ultimately be deemed useless the next. Most of these developments are formed within the Middle East and various regions in Africa as these nations ignite a vast majority of the violence in the world. Terrorism is often solely correlated with statistics of death while analyzing the threat posed

by these organizations because of the direct impact they have. However, while these numbers are significant to analyze, they are miniscule in comparison to the vast plethora of information that requires analyzation to further work to end the threat of terrorist organizations. It is imperative to understand that the financing of terrorist organizations is the main fuel to fire that is current day terrorism. Money leads to power. Power leads to destruction. Without financing, such organizations do not have the mean to execute the treacherous acts that plague our world today. Therefore, the financing of terrorism must be attacked and addressed at its core if changes to the landscape of terrorism are to be made.

### Transpiring Financial Tendencies

Just as the landscape of terrorism is constantly molding to meet the demands of the world, so is the way in which these organizations transfer funds as well. Various methods are used by terrorist organizations to receive and transfer money, therefore, it is important to analyze the emerging trends of how this occurs to fully gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue to craft more relevant solutions.

Financial trends are based on sources of the funds which can either be classified as legitimate or illegitimate. Legitimate sources of funding have been constantly shut down and addressed. This opens the door for illegitimate funding. Consequently, criminal activity has been heavily relied on as a means of obtaining the necessary funds to carry out actions that require money. Money laundering is a lucrative business that requires various methods for transferring the money. Every method used is heavily dependent on the nation or region in which the operations are taking place. Some of the most prominent methods used for money laundering are wire transfers, shell companies, electronic mechanisms, and illegal cash smuggling. The anonymous aspect presented by these methods allow terrorist organizations to thrive and to operate more openly because the identities/sources of their funding is hidden. Usually when organizations move funds from border to border, they have complicit border officials that allow them to conceal their identity and carry on with the illegal activities. By transferring funds online, many organizations have the ability to hide their IP address as to remove any online footprint that may lead back to them. This enticing aspect has seen a large number in increase due to the ease of use and lack of trace.

Similarly, upcoming methods of laundering include bulk cash flow and trade based money laundering. Bulk cash flow describes how organizations attempt to conceal over \$10,000 and transport in in any way that compromises national security. The idea behind this method is to move large sums of money at once using unconventional instruments so that funds can be moved more quickly. Governments are constantly working to combat the threat posed by these terrorist organizations and this includes regulating financial systems to protect them from any threats. This is why these alternative methods of smuggling have grown in popularity and usage in the world. Trade based money laundering is more prevalent where multiple terrorist organization work in collaboration with each other to move the profits made from illegal activities across a large global scheme. These financial tendencies shed light on

important ways in which money is transferred, however, this only identifies how the money is moved. The next pivotal step to be taken is attacking financial funds directly from the source to mitigate the dangers of money laundering.

## Identifying Sources of Funding

Analyzing the true sources of terrorist funding is important because it allows for solutions to be created that tackle the issue from its roots. Terrorist funding has many sources and complexities. Gaining insights on the sources allow for a better understanding of the issue as a whole.

### *Robbing Banks*

One method terrorists obtain funds by is scamming banks. Often terrorist organizations have bank employees that are involved with the organization. This allows for easy access to bank funds and other money. The banks of the United Kingdom are some of the most highly exploited banks in the world. Student loans have been found to fund terrorism. Similarly, in nations such as Syria, cash withdrawals can be made from ATM's in neighboring nations and easily be carried into Syria with that aid of complicit border security officers. These security officers have been able to remain in service because of terrorist organizations and their deep ties with local governments. This amplifies the severity of corruption and also shows how such organizations have nations in the grasp of their hands. Although relatively small in comparison to other methods, this still remains a valid source of funds.

### *Charities*

Donations by far account for a vast percentage of terrorism funding. These donations are sponsored by charities and wealthy individuals who support the idealism presented by many of the terrorist organizations. Al-Qaeda, one of the most prominent terrorist organizations in the world, heavily rely on donations from charities and families based in Saudi Arabia. This holds true for many organizations based in the Middle East. There are thousands of charities in the region and it only takes a few hundred to allow for the continuous operations of these organizations. Some have the intentions of spreading Islam but often time Jihadists use the funds for their radicalism. Local authorities have taken actions to prevent this, however, donations remain a constant pillar for terrorists. One of the pillars of Islam is called zakat. This means that it is mandatory to donate a portion of one's wealth to charity. While some of these charities use their funds for good, it is too often that they have been used to sponsor illegal activities. The magnitude and influence that this has on the global economy is so large that many external nations have taken actions to help prevent the influence donations play on the issue.

### *Shell Companies*

A popular way funding is generated is through shell companies. Terrorist organizations attempt to create real, fully functioning businesses. This can create profits that are used to back the funding for their respective organizations. the most common business fronts are in the agriculture and construction industries due to their wide reach in the regions they operate in. For example, according to the New York Times, Osama Bin Laden owned multiple honey shops in the Middle East that generated money and also provided a way to transport illicit funds and weapons. Similarly, the organizations can use their power to monopolize the businesses they run in their region of choice which allows them to place mass taxes on products that people depend on to generate greater profit.

## *Oil*

Organizations such as ISIS have a unique ability to access oil which is in abundance in specific regions in the world. Groups that have this access often take control of mass oil fields and export it to nations of high demand. ISIS is estimated to have profited around \$600 million a year due to the oil trade. This is a growing operation that is extremely lucrative to organizations who have the economic reach to do so.

These are some of the many methods of transferring and acquiring funds used by terrorist organizations world wide. For example, in the economically feeble and unstable region of Central/West Africa, Boko Haram, one of the largest terrorist organizations in the world and followers of ISIL, have been able to spread their influence deep into the roots of the region. One would believe that weak economies and struggling governments would impede the ability for such large scale terrorist organizations to function properly. However, Boko Haram thrives of these conditions and takes advantage of the situation in many states. Unstable governments allow pathways for Boko Haram to exploit government officials for cooperation in exchange for sums of money. This corruption with not only government officials, but border security officials as well has allowed the organization to run smoothly. Also, robberies and looting play a significant role in the continuity of Boko Haram. Attacks on vessels, villages, farms, and even police station allow the organization to reel in mass amounts of money. The money gathered in different nations can then be transported to a host nation such as Nigeria through the corroboration of corrupt border officials. Thus, the influence and relevancy of Boko Haram in Central Africa can be traced to their means of obtaining funds and their ability to dismantle nations one by one.

With the current state of security in specific terrorist operated areas, cracking down on the financing of terrorism is becoming more improbable by the minute. It is very important that governments take comprehensive measures to stop the funding of these organizations which has an overall detrimental value to the international community.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### The Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

Created in 1989 by the G7, the FATF strives to combat financial crimes and more specifically, the financing of terrorist organizations. The task force generates recommendations that the international community should adhere to in order to ensure relevant actions are being taken. Since terrorist groups change their strategies on how to avoid financial detection, the FATF change/update the recommendations every few years to guarantee they meet the demands of the present. The latest recommendations were aimed at new dangers such as the financing of weapons of mass destructions. Currently, there are 37 member states in the FATF. According to Investopedia, to become a member, a nation must be considered “strategically important” which means they must have a large population/GDP and a stable banking system. Member nations must advocate for the recommendations set forth by the FATF and be committed to taking necessary steps to prevent the issue.

### The United Nations Office on Counter Terrorism

The purpose of this organization is to aid in strengthening counter terrorism efforts within the United Nations. They have taken many concrete actions in combating the threat of terrorism and have also created viable step that can and should be taken which will be explored further in depth later in this report. They also help specific nations in taking targeted actions towards addressing the issue. For example, since 2009, the organization has been helping Colombia’s efforts to tackle the financing of terrorist groups within the nation. The office created specialized tools crafted for the nation to enhance the capability of the nation in intercepting and prosecuting such actions. Such efforts are the only way change will truly be made in regards to the issue.

### The United States of America

Ever since the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, on the Twin Towers in the city of New York, former United States president George Bush initiated a global “world on terror”. This included numerous military operations globally, overhauling security legislation to create parallelism with current issues, and most importantly, preventing financing of these groups. The United States has taken countless steps to ensure that terrorist groups are diminished from their core. For example, according to the Council of Foreign Relations, in only five years time, the nation was able to freeze over \$140 million in terrorist assets across over 1,400 banks. Also, multiple organizations have been created for the sole purpose of targeting the finance aspect of the issue such as the Terrorist Finance Tracking Program(TFTP). The United States issued a message to the international community by stating “you are either with us, or you with the terrorists”. The echoes of this message resulted in many member states joining the United States’ cause and implementing similar and vigorous actions to help reduce the threat of terrorism in our

world.

### The Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran is on the USA's shortlist of nations that sponsor terrorism and has been on the list since 1984. According to a state department report by the US, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei led regime supports, trained and recruited Shia militias in neighboring nations and transports weapons to terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip. Providing weapons to such groups is financial assistance in itself because this allows these groups to divert their money in other places since a large portion of their spendings for weapons has been covered. The FATF has attempted to give Iran a chance to rid itself of such actions and take measures to implement their recommendations. However, supreme leader Khamenei openly spoke out against changing laws to meet FATF regulations. The terrorism countermeasures create issues for Iran because they have already supported Shia militias that have engaged in terrorist acts in order to spread their ideology. If Iran were to implement the recommendations and stop financing these groups, they would lose out on over 100,000 Shia militants, which is the path for them to extend their impact on the Middle east. Iran's negligence to freeze the transfer of terrorist assets and cooperate with member nations has landed the country on the FATF blacklist of high-risk and non compliant jurisdictions.

### The Syrian Arab Republic

As of 1979, Syria has been on the list of active state-sponsors and has repeatedly failed to rid itself of the title. Evidence against the nation led by Bashar Al-Assad suggest they have provided financial and political support to terrorist organizations that impede the safety and development of the region as a whole. According to the FATF, Jihadist groups in the Middle East receive financial support from the nation. Speeches given by Assad give verbal confirmation of the support for such groups such as Hezbollah. The Syrian Government has been instrumental in the expansion of terrorist organizations by serving as a core transit location to enter Iraq for the sole purpose of fighting militias and evidence of such activity is well recorded. These very organizations are the extremist networks that terrorized Syrian and Iraqi populations for months. Though thousands of lives have been lost due to conflict in the nation, Syria has been documented purchasing oil from ISIL which only adds to the organization's revenue. Syria's non-compliance to ratify its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and sponsorship of terrorist organizations display that Syria is only going to continue financing terrorism.

### The Islamic State in Iraq and The Levant (ISIL)

One of the largest, most powerful terrorist organizations in the entire world by the name of ISIL are financially prevalent and are sustained by their large influx of money. ISIL taxes economic activity in regions under its influence and attempts to justify these taxes by relating them to a religious aspect known as zakat. These levies can reach amounts as high as 2.5% on goods and services that the eight million people in the region depend on for their daily livelihood. According to the United Nations, these



taxes can generate up to \$900 million every year for the organization; a massive amount of money that accounts for a large portion of their economic relevance. Due to the fact that ISIL is only prevalent in specific territories, it seeks to exploit resources in areas under its influence, especially wheat. Regions have allowed the organization to control fertile and valuable land near water sources which consequently allows ISIL to gain control of the entire agricultural production. Socially, ISIL can then use this dominance to provide food to the local population and creates a misguided trust with them. This can later be exploited for larger sums of money and in turn creates profitable margins for ISIL. These are only some of the ways ISIL manages to remain a dominant figure on the world landscape, however, there are an abundance of separate methods such as ransom, extortion, and selling artifacts, which the terrorist group uses to remain financially benefited.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1972	Former US president Richard Nixon creates The cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism to further learn about the complexities of terrorism within the US and abroad as well
1989	Financial Action Task Force is Created
September 11, 2001	Twin Tower attacks in New York City and the US government declares an international war against terrorism
September 28, 2001	Counter Terrorism Committee is established to help remedy the threat of terrorism
April 10, 2002	United Nations Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism Financing is signed to officially declare acts of financing terrorism illegal
July 14, 2016	Nice, France Terror Attacks and the international community diverts attention to combat the issue



June 15, 2017

The United Nations Office on Counter Terrorism is established

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

Below are a list of relevant UN treaties, resolutions, and events that have been enacted or taken place in attempts to solve the issue.

- United Nations Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism Financing **(1999)**
- Measures to eliminate international terrorism, December 7, 2017 **(A/RES/72/123)**
- The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review, June 24, 2014 **(A/RES/68/276)**
- Resolution on international judicial cooperation in countering terrorism, December 12, 2016 **(S/RES/2322)**
- Creation of the Counter Terrorism Committee, September 28, 2001, **(S/RES/1373)**
- Secretary-General's report Uniting against Terrorism: Recommendations for Global Counterterrorism Strategy, April 27, 2006, **(A/60/825)**

## Previous Attempts to Solve The Issue

With the many solutions and resolutions that have been implemented, a large number of them have proven to be effective in attacking the issue at its core. A lot of these solutions hold strong bases and are fundamentally sound, but simply need to be built upon to meet the ongoing growing needs of the issue presently.

The United Nations Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism Financing is just one example of many of a solution that has been already implemented and executed. The convention was ratified in 1999 designed to tackle criminalizing acts of financing terrorism in all of its forms. It also aims to foster cooperation between member states in order to prevent such issues from occurring. As of 2018, there are 188 states that have signed the treaty and is one of the most successful anti-terrorism efforts in history. Also, member states that have signed the treaty have committed to freezing any assets or funds that have the intention of being used for terrorism financing, and to share the nature of these funds with other member states so that comprehensive measures can be taken to help prevent the issue in the future.

As previously stated, terrorist organizations are constantly changing and adapting to different circumstances. They have been able to continue in large due to the lack of communication between nations. Although addressed in many previous solutions, methods for constant communication between nations are lacking. This means that terrorists can exploit this and continue their actions. Therefore,

means of effective and concise communication methods between nations is a weakness to be addressed.

Similarly, the FATF has laid the framework for tackling the issue at its core. The FATF bases its approach on five main pillars that serve to outline measures that must be taken by all nations. According to the FATF, these pillars include: understanding terrorist financing risks, establishing up-to-date and effective FATF standards to combat terrorist financing, ensuring countries are appropriately and effectively applying the tools (as set out in the standards) to identify and disrupt terrorist financing activity, identifying countries with strategic deficiencies for terrorist financing, and finally, promoting effective domestic coordination and international cooperation. A key part of this is identifying nations with weak anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism measures. A single country with weak standards creates risk for the global financial system in its entirety. Terrorist organizations will always strive to counter measures put in place and to continue financing their activities. Therefore, the work conducted by the FATF has been and will continue to be pivotal to maintaining the integrity of the global economy and to continuously work towards a future free of terrorism.

## Possible Solutions

Producing feasible and effective solutions within resolutions is imperative in ensuring quality debate and more importantly, directly remedying the imminent issue of illegal firearms trafficking by transnational organized criminal groups. Therefore, here are broad solutions that can be addressed when crafting resolutions and can help you as delegates generate more innovative and creative solutions.

The greatest difficulty that terrorist organizations present is that they have always been able to remain one-step ahead of authorities when it comes to tracking their financing. They mold their activities to meet the changing efforts posed by security. Moving money online or through wire transferring has proven to become more and more difficult due to the trail it leaves, leaving such organizations vulnerable to be tracked. Therefore, illegal activities such as counterfeiting and smuggling have become increasingly more popular to aid in avoiding detection. Cash has become the predominant way of transferring funds as it is harder to trace and can be transferred through many methods. According to the news source Napoleoni, a majority of the funding provided to Al-Qaeda in Iraq is smuggled through neighboring nations' borders. Officials in these border areas are corrupt and sometimes work in partner with such organizations in order to help operations remain fluid. Officials receive small sums of cash in order to let illegal activities continue. Therefore, one of the most important solutions that needs to be implemented is strengthening border security in areas of relevancy. This starts by having highly trained officials stationed at these locations that are equipped with needed equipment to carry out the actions

needed. These officials should undergo a proper training course that teaches them the needed skills and scenarios that occur in such locations. Also, ensuring that thorough and proper checks are done by anyone or anything leaving or entering such locations to limit the entry of funds. Submitting reports of activity to a regional committee will help keep track of activity in these locations. This is one crucial step that must be taken to help remedy the issue.

Another important issue that must be addressed is corruption. One way this can be tackled is by training officers in UN funded programs that provide them with proper education and ways to handle situations when terrorist organizations attempt to cross borders. This will ensure that corruption in borders is negated and that the risk is no longer present. This can be aided by placing multiple cameras in areas of relevancy so that analyzation teams can watch footage and see where the problems reside. Also, increasing the pay of officials is imperative to ensure that they will not be drawn by money.

Similarly, communications between nations need to be drastically improved as this has proved to be a pivotal step when addressing various terrorist related issues. Terrorist organizations have no regards for borders and transcend boundaries. For this reason it is crucial international communication must be improved. Since most terrorist activities and financing occurs in targeted areas, neighboring nations need to develop concrete ways in order to communicate any data or information that could prove to be important in the combatting of the issue. This could be done by submitting monthly reports to a regional security team to be analyzed in order to be examined and dissected to understand further actions that must be taken. When terrorist organizations strike nations, the international community comes together in times of need to provide support. However, when actions need to be taken beforehand to limit these attacks, it is difficult for nations to cooperate and take concrete actions to stop such actions. International communication is the forefront for a more sustainable future, especially in one plagued by the threats posed by terrorist organizations. More effort needs to be put into typologies and how to combat them. Therefore, combating the financing, the lifeline of these organizations is the only way the world can move forward.

The financing of terrorist organizations has proven the ability to devastate the world as we know it today. Thus, innovative and ingenious solutions are the only way to work towards a better future where citizens can live without fear of having to flee their homes at any given moment.

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