

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

FORUM ON RETURNING FOREIGN FIGHTERS: INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS & DECISION-MAKERS CONVENED IN DOHA

As governments struggle to implement effective policies and collaborate efficiently on the returning foreign fighter phenomenon, an international consortium of experts, practitioners, and decision-makers met in Doha to address the challenge.

LINK TO WEBSITE

(Doha, Qatar – November 1, 2018) An international gathering opened by His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, took place in Doha, Qatar, from 30-31 October, 2018, bringing together a consortium of experts, practitioners, and policy-makers to address the global challenge of returning foreign fighters.

Organized by The Soufan Center, Georgetown University in Qatar, Qatar University, and the Qatar International Academy for Security Studies, the *Forum on Returning Foreign Fighters: Policies and Actions to Address the Threat and Protect Vulnerable Communities* served as an opportunity for a multi-disciplinary network to come together to address the foreign fighter phenomenon and its effects on vulnerable communities and global security.

Leading Experts, Practitioners, and Decision-Makers Gathered

The keynote address was provided by **His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani**. "Terrorism cannot be confronted and eliminated unless the international community unites its efforts," underlined H.E. Sheikh Mohamed. "Strong cooperation among all states, international and regional organizations, civil society organizations and academic and research entities is essential in the exchange of intelligence, and the prevention of terrorist threats as part of the international strategy to combat terrorism," he stressed.

Other key speakers included **His Excellency Dr. Khalid bin Mohamed Al Attiyah**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs of Qatar, and **His Excellency Panos Kammenos**, Minister of National Defence of Greece.

Among the experts in attendance were **Major General Abdul Aziz Al-Ansari**, Chairman of National Counter-Terrorism Committee of Qatar; **Gilles de Kerchove**, the European Union's Counter-Terrorism Coordinator; **Fionnuala Ni Aolain**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism; **Fabrizio Carboni**, Regional Director for the Near and Middle East, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); **Colonel Sean Ryan**, Spokesman for Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve; **Nicholas Rasmussen**, former Director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) in the U.S.; and **Peter Bergen**, CNN National Security Analyst. The event moderators included **Steve Clemons** from The Atlantic, **Charlie Savage** from The New York Times, and **Bobby Ghosh** from Bloomberg.

Over 60 countries were represented at the gathering. There was also participation by current and former representatives from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. State Department, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of the Treasury, the British Parliament and Her Majesty's Prison Service. Participants from prominent think-tanks, universities and NGO's, included the RAND Corporation, the Brookings Institution, New America, Georgetown University, the University of Oxford, the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) in The Hague, Silatech, and the Qatar Foundation.

Led by **David Scharia, Chief of Branch of the United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED)**, the conference hosted events by CTED & The Global Research Network. Launched to strengthen the UNSC's Counter-Terrorism Committee's research and analysis capacities, the Global Research Network consists of leading think tanks and research institutions from across the world. The conclusions of the forum will be shared with the United Nations to support Member States' implementation of Council resolutions and other work on this topic.

The conference also featured two screenings. Acclaimed Italian journalist and film-maker **Francesca Mannocchi** screened her documentary *Isis, Tomorrow. The Lost Souls of Mosul*, revolving around the fate of children of the so-called Islamic State fighters left behind in Iraq after the organization was swept out of the country at the end of 2017. The film premiered at the Venice Film Festival in 2018. A screening of Hulu's *The Looming Tower* also took place, followed by a discussion with Pulitzer-prize winning author **Lawrence Wright**.

An Evolving Challenge

Over 40,000 foreign citizens from more than 110 countries are known to have traveled to Iraq and Syria both before and after the Islamic State declared its caliphate in 2014. While many of those individuals have been killed and thousands more have been captured and detained by local security forces, a large number will attempt to return to their countries of origin or residence or third-countries. Research by The Soufan Center has found that at least 5,600 men, women, and children from 33 countries have already returned home.

The *Forum on Returning Foreign Fighters* addressed a range of issues – from understanding the global terrorism landscape today to addressing challenges to prosecution to discussing the particular issue of returning women, children, and families. The Forum provided an opportunity for researchers, academics, policymakers, diplomats, practitioners and top intelligence, military, and law enforcement professionals, to come together with governments in order to solidify the international network of those working to address this global challenge.

ABOUT THE FORUM ON RETURNING FOREIGN FIGHTERS

The *Forum on Returning Foreign Fighters: Policies and Actions to Address the Threat and Protect Vulnerable Communities* took place from 30-31 October in Doha, Qatar.

Please contact **Stephanie Foggett** with any inquiries or interview requests:
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