

Press Releases: Regional Symposium To Combat Recruitment and Radicalization to Violence in Prisons

Media Note
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The State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism, in partnership with the Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), hosted a regional symposium in Zagreb, Croatia, April 25–26, on efforts to address and counter prison radicalization.

Many countries throughout the Balkans have reported cases of individuals being radicalized while incarcerated and government officials from the region have specifically requested assistance in countering terrorist recruitment and radicalization to violence. Therefore, this symposium brought together prison officials from throughout the Balkans – as well as representatives from international and regional organizations – to assess global and regional trends in efforts to recruit and radicalize in prisons; discuss a range of good practices to help officials develop and refine programs and procedures; and share insights related to the assessment, classification, management, and rehabilitation of violent extremist inmates.

Recent research indicates prisons may serve as incubators of radicalization to violence. For example, several individuals associated with terrorist attacks in Brussels, Copenhagen, London, and Nice, may have been radicalized during their incarceration prior to committing terrorist attacks. This symposium aimed to provide prison officials with the necessary tools and knowledge to better manage and rehabilitate violent extremists as well as provide guidance on developing programs and procedures to help limit the opportunities for recruitment and radicalization to occur.

Representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Serbia, and the United States attended, as well as experts from Penal Reform International, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the Global Center on Cooperative Security, and the International Counterterrorism Center – The Hague.

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