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Public Launch of the IJ's Criminal Justice Practitioner's Guide for Addressing REMVE

REMARKS

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Importance of IJ Initiative

I would like to thank his excellency George Vella, President of the Republic of Malta, for participating today and for his insightful remarks. I also want to applaud the IJ for its release today of the new *Criminal Justice Practitioner's Guide for Addressing REMVE*, and for its leadership on this important and timely initiative. This effort brought together practitioners and subject-matter experts from over twenty countries and international organizations over the past year to identify global good practices for criminal justice practitioners to counter racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism, or REMVE, which includes what is often referred to as "violent white supremacy," or "far right extremism," or "white supremacy." The guide includes good practices on counterterrorism tools and legislation within the criminal justice sector that countries should consider adopting to effectively tackle the REMVE threat in concert with non-governmental actors, including social media companies and community leaders. This initiative focused on REMVE is yet another example of how the IJ really is at the forefront of the international community's efforts to tackle the most difficult counterterrorism challenges, particularly in the rule of law space.

You will hear more later today on this subject from officials from the United States, Germany, and Norway, but it is clear that criminal justice actors have a central role to play in countering REMVE threats. From identifying, investigating, disrupting, and prosecuting REMVE cells, networks, and lone actors to incarcerating REMVE offenders, to providing prison rehabilitation programs, to post-release monitoring, the scope of criminal justice responsibilities in this area is broad. This guide provides practical and valuable guidance on how governments can most effectively use criminal justice tools to address REMVE, and will be an important resource for years to come. I was pleased to hear that the IJ is already exploring how this guide can be incorporated into its training and capacity building efforts, and

we look forward to working closely with the IJ on this effort.

The Growing Transnational REMVE Threat

The release of this guide is quite timely given the rise and increased visibility of REMVE around the world. As just one bellwether, the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee reported a 320 percent increase in “extreme right-wing terrorism” globally in the five years prior to 2020. Deadly REMVE attacks have occurred in recent years in Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In March, we commemorated the second anniversary of the horrific attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, where a gunman killed 51 people at a mosque and then an Islamic Center, a horror that was livestreamed to bypass technology companies’ measures to stop it and then further amplified by supporters on the internet. Next week, July 22 marks the 10-year anniversary of the deadly REMVE attack in Oslo, Norway, where nearly 80 people were massacred by an individual inspired by a violent racist and white supremacist worldview.

White supremacist and neo-Nazi groups appear to be gaining international prominence, with an attendant rise in violent attacks. There is also concerning evidence of transnational links between and among REMVE individuals and groups. Indeed, from Christchurch to Pittsburgh to Quebec City to Hanau, we have seen an escalation in violence perpetrated by REMVE actors around the world. These individuals are increasingly interconnected – often online and across borders – sharing ideas, ideologies, and tactics, often. The lack of clear command and control structures and the prevailing use of sophisticated encryption technology make these semi-formal networks challenging to identify and dismantle.

To effectively tackle the threat posed by REMVE actors, we need to understand the motivations and ideologies that fuel the horrific crimes they commit. The ongoing and increasing violent extremist exploitation of online platforms can connect REMVE individuals and groups to a broad range of conspiracy theories, mis- and disinformation, and violent extremist ideologies. They often use coded language and symbols that keep changing, complicating efforts to identify REMVE actors and address the threats they pose. While these informal online communities make it difficult to encapsulate one overarching REMVE narrative, anti-Semitism often plays a central role in REMVE ideologies, drawing extensively from Nazi-era propaganda.

Many attacks by REMVE individuals and groups are self-funded, but REMVE actors also raise money from a variety of licit and illicit sources, including merchandise and music sales, donations from individuals, criminal activity such as narcotics and weapons trafficking and selling counterfeit goods, and providing military-style training to other violent extremists. In contrast with Islamist terrorists, who often rely on informal financial institutions and networks, REMVE groups often use formal financial institutions, such as banks and monetary transmitters, to move funds domestically and internationally. Several REMVE groups are also known to use crowdfunding platforms and virtual currency to solicit donations and effect money transfers.

Countering the REMVE Threat

I will focus primarily today on what the U.S. Department of State is doing to counter the REMVE threat, but before I outline our efforts, let me first say a word about the whole-of-government approach the Biden Administration is bringing to this fight. The Administration has prioritized countering this threat, and just a few weeks ago launched the first-ever National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism. The strategy provides a framework for the U.S. Government and our partners to understand and share domestic terrorism-related information; prevent domestic

Government and our partners to understand and share domestic terrorism-related information, prevent domestic terrorism recruitment and mobilization to violence; disrupt and deter domestic terrorism activity; and confront long-term contributors to domestic terrorism.

Turning to the State Department, we play an integral role in the U.S. Government's counterterrorism efforts, including on REMVE. The Department's role begins at our borders and extends internationally. We have a broad range of tools that we use to counter the REMVE threat, which includes measures to detect and prevent terrorist travel, diplomatic engagement and information sharing, public diplomacy, tech sector engagement, using terrorist sanctions and leveraging foreign assistance resources. I will provide a quick overview of each of these lines of effort.

Countering Terrorist Financing and Travel

First, the State Department is focusing its counterterrorism-related designation authorities to counter the REMVE threat. In April 2020, we designated the Russian Imperial Movement (or RIM) and three of its leaders as Specially Designated Global Terrorists. This was the first time we had ever designated REMVE actors using State Department authorities. Employing these terrorist designations – sometimes referred to as “naming and shaming” – enables us to expose and isolate organizations and individuals and disrupt their terrorist activities, including by limiting their access to the U.S. financial system and facilitating certain U.S. law enforcement actions.

Second, the State Department plays a leading role in detecting and preventing international travel by terrorists – including REMVE actors. We are actively encouraging partner governments to nominate REMVE actors, as appropriate, into their own national watchlists as well as international law enforcement platforms, such as INTERPOL. This strengthens border security screening measures to better identify and counter REMVE travel globally.

Diplomatic Engagement and Public Diplomacy

Third, through diplomatic engagement via U.S. embassies abroad, the State Department proactively engages with foreign partners to bolster information-sharing and cooperation on efforts to counter REMVE. We are also engaging our foreign partners, as well as technology sector and civil society partners, through multilateral fora such as the Council of Europe, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the industry-led *Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism*, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Hedayah, and the United Nations. Just a few weeks ago at the United Nations High Level Counterterrorism Week, the United States co-sponsored with the United Kingdom and the Soufan Center an event entitled, “A Perfect Storm: White Supremacists, Conspiracy Theories and Violent Extremism.”

Fourth, public diplomacy offers an effective, proven tool in countering REMVE. We are leveraging international platforms to build the capacity of local governments to manage the REMVE threat. Through the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program, for example, we have introduced international government and law enforcement officials to strategies used by the U.S. Government and private sector to prevent attacks on public gathering places and other soft targets, such as houses of worship, which can be targeted by REMVE actors. We have also increased awareness among foreign audiences by amplifying the testimony of “formers” through speaker programs. These are individuals who were previously involved in REMVE, have realized the error of their ways, and are now uniquely qualified and motivated to dissuade others from becoming radicalized to violence.

Engagement with the Tech Sector

With the State Department engages with the international community and tech companies in the vitally important effort to counter the use of the internet by REMVE actors for terrorist purposes. The reliance of REMVE actors on online platforms to radicalize, recruit, communicate, fundraise, and organize to commit acts of violence makes this line of effort particularly consequential. We have also engaged tech companies to share information about terrorist trends and tactics and asked that they consider voluntarily removing REMVE-related content when appropriate by establishing and enforcing rigorous terms of service that forbid the use of their platforms for terrorist purposes. An important part of that effort is ensuring that platforms and providers balance content management with human rights considerations, notably freedom of expression. For example, following the designation of RIM, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Google/YouTube and others decided to remove RIM accounts and content from their platforms. This was an important step that was facilitated by the designation, although government designations are not required for companies to be able to act against bad actors on their platforms based on violations of the companies' policies.

In line with this priority effort to counter terrorist use of the internet, the United States recently joined the Christchurch Call to Action to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online, pledging with New Zealand, and France, and the many other member governments, as well as with private sector technology partners and civil society, to work together to address terrorist and violent extremist content online. We look forward to active partnership with other governments, the private sector, and civil society members to ensure that online platforms are not exploited for terrorist or violent extremist purposes. The United States applauds language in the Christchurch Call emphasizing the importance of respecting human rights and the rule of law, including the protection of freedom of expression.

Foreign Partners' Capacity Building

Finally, the State Department uses its foreign assistance funding to build partners' capacity to address the REMVE threat. Our support for the IJ and this IJ initiative are just one example of this line of effort, and we will be working closely with the IJ in the months ahead to continue the momentum, including the development of further training and capacity building workshops based on this practitioners' guide. We are also deeply involved in the Global Counterterrorism Forum's nascent work in this area and plan to pilot several other REMVE initiatives in the near future. We encourage everyone to share the guide with your respective governments and networks, and hope it will be useful in your communities in helping to effectively address the global REMVE threat.

Conclusion

While we have had success in raising awareness of the global REMVE threat, with countries far more focused on this aspect of international terrorism, and are also beginning to make progress together to counter REMVE actors' activities, we all recognize that there is much more to be done. The scale and complexity of REMVE threats around the world reflect the fact that terrorist threats have become more diverse, challenging and globally dispersed, in part as a consequence of terrorists leveraging information technology to spread their twisted ideas with unprecedented speed and reach. It is important that we work together to help close gaps in our collective understanding of REMVE networks, groups, and individuals, including how loosely affiliated REMVE groups operate, communicate, finance, recruit, train, and plot. We are fully committed to further strengthening our efforts, and to working with all of you and other partners in the global community to effectively address the transnational dimension of the REMVE threat.

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