



Expert Group Meeting on Addressing Technology-Facilitated Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Linked to Terrorism

Palais des Nations, Geneva, 12 May 2026

Building A, Room XV

Concept Note

Background and Thematic Focus

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is known to be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, used as a tactic of terrorism, and an instrument to increase their power through supporting financing, recruitment, and the destruction of communities. Across its women, peace and security (WPS) and counter-terrorism agendas, the UN Security Council has called for a number of measures to address the linkages between terrorism, human trafficking and SGBV, from countering the financing of terrorism and advancing criminal justice responses to ensuring victims' access to support, recognition and redress through a survivor-centred approach. Most recently, Security Council Resolution 2734 (2024) recognised that the planning, directing, or committing of acts involving sexual and gender-based violence may render individuals eligible for designation in its ISIL (Da'esh) and al-Qaida Sanctions List.

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has enabled new and evolving modalities through which terrorist actors perpetrate sexual and gender-based violence. A growing body of evidence shows that terrorist groups across the ideological spectrum are increasingly leveraging online platforms and digital tools to commit SGBV. Technology-facilitated SGBV can be defined as “any act that is committed or amplified using digital tools or technologies causing physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm to women and

girls because of their gender. These forms of violence are part of a larger pattern of violence against women, occurring online and offline [...].”¹

Manifestations of this type of violence range from the online trafficking, sale, and sexual exploitation of women and girls to campaigns of gender-based harassment, threats, and hate that contribute to radicalisation pathways and targeted violence. For example, Da’esh members traded and sold unmarried women and girls in online slave auctions, using an encrypted application that circulated photographs of the captives, as well as details of their age, marital status, current location, and price. In Europe and North America, members of the so-called “manosphere,” an online ecology of websites, memes, and message boards featuring deeply misogynistic content, have been responsible for several gender-based, anti-Muslim, and antisemitic mass killings.² Indeed, online misogyny has been identified as a potential vector for violent extremism and terrorism, underscoring the need to examine technology-facilitated SGBV not as a peripheral issue but as an integral component of preventing and countering terrorism.

There is an urgent need to better understand and deepen the evidence base on the linkages between online misogyny, targeted violence, and terrorism. However, significant gaps remain in understanding this evolving phenomenon and how to effectively respond to it. Challenges include limited analysis of the diverse manifestations of tech-facilitated SGBV linked to terrorism; difficulties in identifying perpetrators and preserving digital evidence; gaps and inconsistencies in domestic legal frameworks; and limited capacity within law enforcement and criminal justice systems to investigate and prosecute such crimes effectively. Online violence is still frequently trivialised and its connections to offline harm are too often ignored. As a result, appropriate assistance to victims is frequently lacking.

Rationale of the Event

In light of the evolving threat landscape and the need for a more effective response, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) are jointly organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) to provide a practitioner-informed foundation for future engagement to address technology-facilitated SGBV linked to terrorism. The EGM will be held over one full day and will focus on in-depth discussions aimed at clarifying key concepts, challenges, and emerging practices.

¹ UN-Women, “FAQs: Trolling, stalking, doxing and other forms of violence against women in the digital age”. Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/faqs/digital-abuse-trolling-stalking-and-other-forms-of-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women>

² Gender-based mass killings linked to the “incel” subculture include the 2014 killings in Isla Vista, California, United States of America; the 2015 Umpqua Community College shooting (United States); and the 2018 Toronto, Canada, van attack. Perpetrators of the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings (New Zealand) and the 2020 Hanau synagogue shooting (Germany) had also frequented manosphere platforms. Jasser, Kelly, and Rothermel, “Male supremacism and the Hanau terrorist attack.” Cited in Dier and Baldwin, “Masculinities and violent extremism”, p. 7

Objectives

The EGM will provide a dedicated forum to experts from international and regional organizations, civil society, academia, research and technology networks and the private sector to address critical gaps in knowledge and policy practice related to addressing technology-facilitated SGBV linked to terrorism.

The EGM will seek to deepen a shared understanding of the different forms and impacts of technology-facilitated SGBV perpetrated or exploited by terrorist actors, as well as the linkages between online and offline violence. Particular attention will be given to the role of online misogyny in creating pathways to violent extremism and terrorism. The meeting will also explore the gaps in existing legal, policy, and operational frameworks and the related challenges faced by Member States in investigating and prosecuting tech-facilitated SGBV.

Building on these discussions, the EGM will aim to identify priority areas where further research, policy development, and technical assistance are needed to strengthen national and international responses. By highlighting promising practices and drawing on diverse perspectives and expertise, the meeting will provide a foundational platform to advance a more demand-driven approach to support Member States and relevant stakeholders in addressing this complex and evolving dimension of the terrorist threat.

