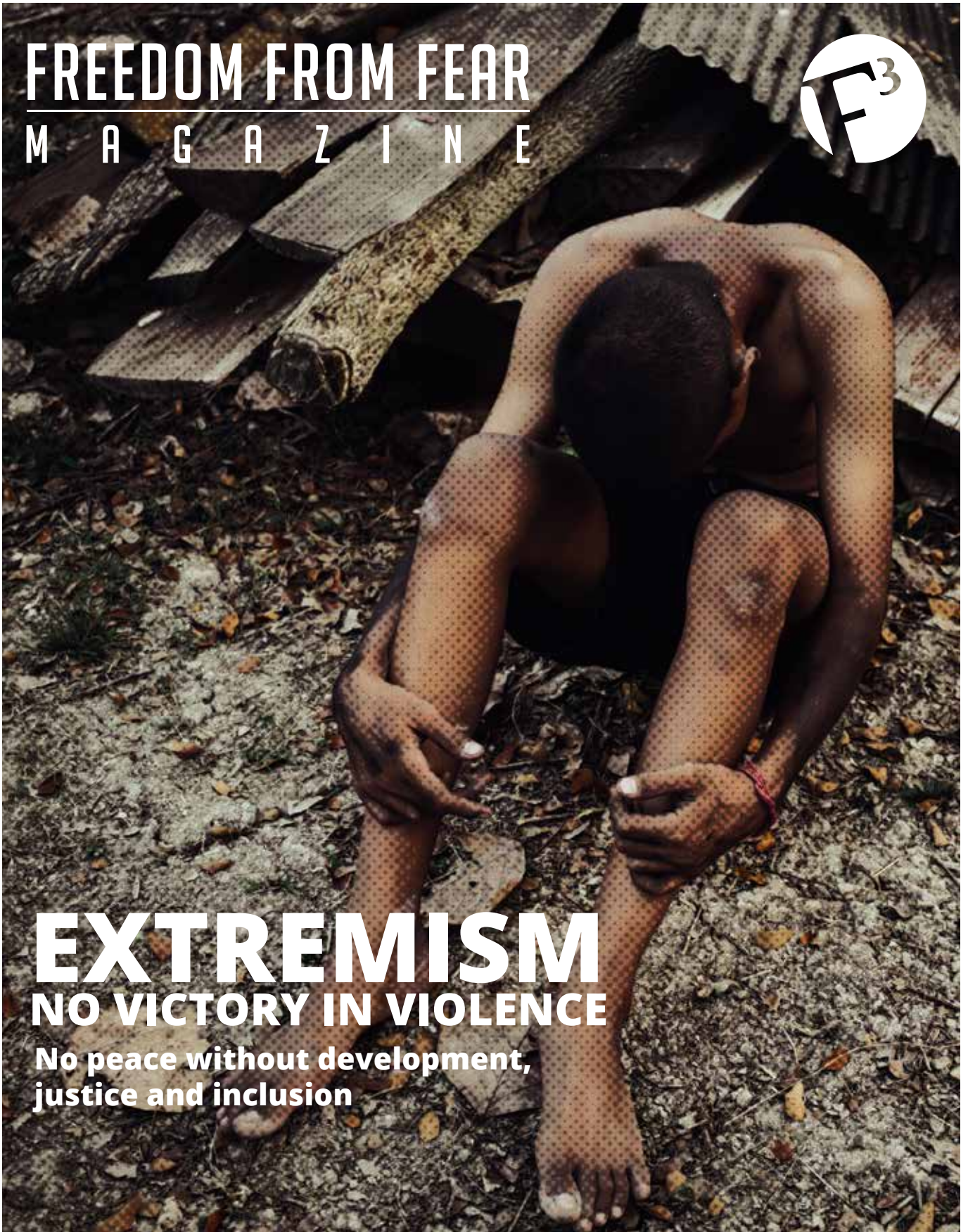


# FREEDOM FROM FEAR

M A G A Z I N E



# EXTREMISM

## NO VICTORY IN VIOLENCE

No peace without development,  
justice and inclusion

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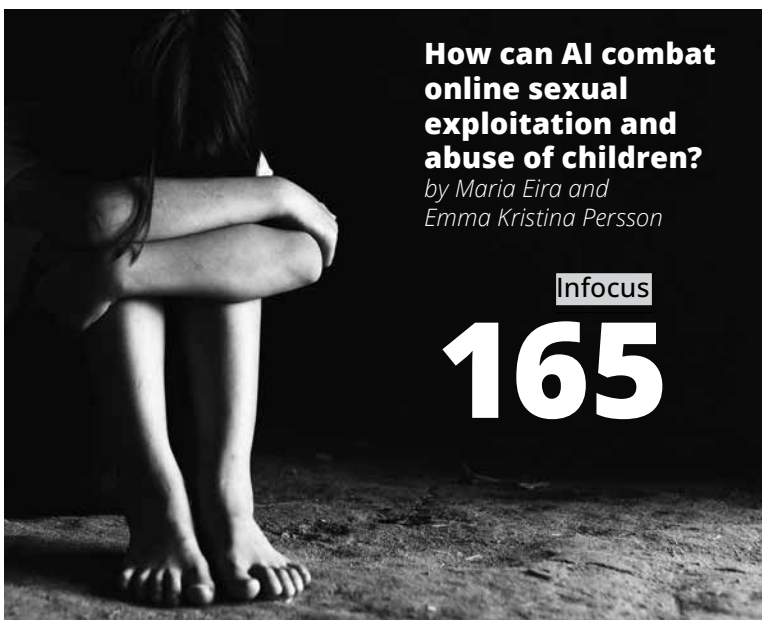
*by Dr. Arian Sharifi under the guidance of Matthew Burnett-Stuart, Carlotta Zenere, and Leif Villadsen*



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### Staying ahead of the curve in efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism

**by Antonia Marie De Meo**  
Director of UNICRI

This year began with the harrowing news of a terrorist attack at a mosque in Peshawar, Pakistan. The world watched and listened in horror as the death toll rose from an initial 30 to over 100 within hours as more bodies were uncovered from the debris. More than 200 people, mostly police officers, were injured. This daring suicide bomb attack at a mosque in a police compound was a stark reminder of the imminent danger posed by terrorism and violent extremism, and an example of their effect. This attack was among a number that occurred in the first quarter of the year, with varying degrees of impact on lives and infrastructure.

Terrorism and violent extremism are the bane of our time. From individual lone-wolf mass shootings to suicide bombings, the methods vary but the impacts are devastating. Beyond loss of lives, injuries and the destruction of infrastructure, the twin scourges of terrorism and violent extremism threaten democracy, adversely affect stability of governments, and retard economic development. Such incidents are difficult to foretell and forestall due to their pervasive and unpredictable nature.

As the United Nations research and training institute for criminal justice and crime prevention, UNICRI has a vested interest in enhancing safety and security. The Institute closely monitors trends and developments, with a view to enhancing the capacity of Member States and partners to prevent, curtail or respond to such incidents. UNICRI implements an array of programmes that contribute to counter-terrorism efforts and works with UN entities, governments, and civil society actors in its whole-of-society approach.

As a member of the [UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact](#), UNICRI contributes to coordinated efforts across the United Nations system to prevent and counter terrorism. Its pivotal role includes supporting Member States to translate the good practices identified in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy into national policies. UNICRI works in three priority areas, namely: a) enhancing efforts for rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders and returning foreign terrorist fighters, both inside and outside prisons; b) supporting local communities and civil society organizations in preventing and countering radicalization and extremist activity; and c) working with vulnerable populations, particularly at-risk youth, to strengthen prevention of violent extremism through empowerment and resilience.

This issue of the *Freedom From Fear* magazine highlights trends related to terrorism and violent extremism. It illustrates efforts by UNICRI and partners to stay ahead of the curve through diverse initiatives. From analysing new tools used by terrorist actors to new hot spots for terrorist attacks, this issue shows evolving trends as terrorists and violent extremists adapt to a changing world. A crucial element is the nexus between terrorism and transnational organized crime, a mutually profitable symbiosis that sustains both terrorist and criminal groups and activities. This issue also assesses the emerging link between climate change and violent extremism, and its resultant threat to peace and security, while also highlighting

gender-based norms of violent extremism. It amplifies the voices of terrorism survivors and their role in preventing radicalization, as well as lessons learned from disengaging from violent extremism. It also examines how sports can support strategies to address violent extremism and promote inclusion. Lastly, to promote justice and accountability, this issue looks at the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of radiological and nuclear terrorism.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) is an emerging area that presents both threats and opportunities for terrorists and violent extremists, as well as counter-terrorism actors. In this technological age, with the imminent possibility of new and emerging technologies being used for terrorist purposes, it is crucial to understand the potential misuses of technology and identify the gaps in legal frameworks or governance systems, to better facilitate investigations and prosecutions to hold criminals and terrorists accountable for malicious use of these technologies.

UNICRI has been identifying and analysing the impact of technological changes on trends and patterns in crime, including terrorism, and exploring the potential opportunities technology presents for law enforcement and counter-terrorism actors. Working with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), UNICRI looked extensively at trends and developments in cybercrime, extrapolating potential malicious uses of AI for terrorist purposes. The Institute's report [Algorithms and Terrorism](#)

observes that terrorist organizations have tended to use various forms of 'low-tech terrorism', such as firearms and vehicles. It concludes that the current capability of groups such as Da'esh to effectively deploy AI is unlikely, but as it becomes more widespread and the barriers to entry lower, the risks increase. In this context, the crime-as-a-service model, through which terrorist groups and individuals seek services offered by cyber criminals on the dark web, may enable terrorists to launch more technologically advanced cyber-attacks.

UNICRI has also been monitoring the impact of technology around Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) terrorism. In 2021, UNICRI and UNOCT published the report ["Advances in Science and Technology to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism"](#). This report elaborates possible risks associated with the malicious use of science and technology to develop and deploy WMD and identifies solutions to prevent and combat WMD terrorism.

The misuse of ICT to generate and spread conspiracy theories and disinformation is another priority area because acts of terrorism and violent extremism are often linked to hatred and racism, xenophobia, islamophobia, and anti-Semitism. Early during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICRI conducted a [study](#), ["Stop the Virus of Disinformation"](#), on the malicious use of social media. In January 2023, UNICRI released a new [Handbook to Combat CBRN Disinformation](#) for practitioners of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risk mitigation to debunk maliciously generated

false information by non-State actors, including terrorists.

In October 2022, UNICRI published the report [Perceptions of climate change and violent extremism: Listening to local communities in Chad](#). This explores community members' experiences and perceptions on the role of climate change and degradation of natural resources in exacerbating local conflicts, as well as the impact of climate change on violent extremist groups' recruitment narratives. This was followed in December 2022 by the launch of a project to build gender-sensitive resilience to violent extremism in the Sahel.

UNICRI recognises youth vulnerability to recruitment and radicalization to terrorism, as well as their important role to help prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism and promote peace and security. UNICRI is working with the UNOCT-led United Nations Global Sports Programme's [#MoreThanAGame](#) campaign that targets youth and highlights stories of professional athletes and young people whose lives have been changed through sport. The campaign, launched on 18 November alongside the 2022 FIFA World Cup, was attended by youth who are training to be practitioners to prevent violent extremism (PVE) and promote peace. Campaign

partners marked the first [International Day](#) for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism on 12 February 2023 with sport-based PVE activities.

UNICRI contributes to enhancing knowledge about the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism and assists Member States to incorporate effective measures in their crime prevention and counter-terrorism strategies. This includes initiatives aimed at improving policies to prevent the trafficking of persons, drugs, arms, and CBRN materials, both for profit and operational use. Its [Policy Toolkit](#) on The Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism, published in 2019, equips policy-makers and experts to address the Nexus in various regions.

While UNICRI prioritises human lives in the global fight against terrorism and violent extremism, it also focuses on threats to vulnerable targets, including critical infrastructure and public places. Terrorist attacks on critical infrastructure can significantly disrupt the functioning of government and the private sector, while attacks in public places can lead to multiple fatalities. Potential attacks against vulnerable targets have become increasingly at-

tractive to terrorist organizations because they can be carried out with minimal resources and little to no complex planning.

The Institute works closely with various actors to enhance safety and security for vulnerable targets. In September 2022 the [United Nations Global Programme on Countering Terrorist Threats Against Vulnerable Targets](#), led by UNOCT and jointly implemented with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), UNICRI and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), launched five [specialized modules](#) dedicated to the protection of vulnerable targets against terrorist attacks. The modules incorporate principles and policies developed by UNICRI over its 20-year history of developing counterterrorism and security policies for major events and tourist destinations.

This issue of the *Freedom From Fear* magazine focuses on diverse but critical topics related to violent extremism and terrorism, their far-reaching and cross-cutting consequences, and preventative efforts that are underway.

I hope you'll enjoy reading the magazine, learn from the authors who have shared their expertise, and be inspired to act against terrorism and violent extremism within your sphere of influence.



**Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man.**

*Mahatma Gandhi*