



**28th session of the
Human Rights Council**

**Item3 General Debate
13 March 2015
Delivered by Renate Bloem**

CIVICUS applauds the very principled stand of the High Commissioner in addressing the challenges to human rights to counter terrorism. In this context we pledge once more support for the independence of the HC and his Office.

“The fight against terror is a struggle to *uphold* the values of democracy and human rights – not undermine them” Many terrorist organisations, including *Boko Haram, Al-Shaba, ISIS or Al Khaida*, pose genuine threats to national security, human rights, stability, and civilian populations across entire regions.

However, anti-terrorism legislation in many countries is *not* used to prosecute terrorists. Conversely, such laws often serve as a smokescreen to stifle dissenting voices, and are routinely and willfully misapplied to target human rights defenders, journalists, and wider civil society, instead of addressing genuine national security concerns.

So-called ‘anti-terrorism’ legislation has had a chilling effect on civil society and the human rights community in **Ethiopia**, where such laws have been used to restrict the work of human rights defenders, dismantle independent civil society, and jail journalists *en masse*. In **Cameroon**, a recent draft anti-terrorism law introduces wide-ranging and disproportionate sanctions for journalists exercising their right to freedom of expression. In **Sudan**, prominent human rights defenders remain detained following charges under Sudan’s Anti-terrorism Act of 2001. **Kenya**’s High Court recently nullified provisions of a law that threatened journalists with up to three years behind bars if their reports “undermined investigations” or security operations relating to terrorism.

But also in **Europe** we see worrying trends such as the **UK**’s introduction of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill seen to undermine human rights. Similarly, **Spain** passed the controversial new Citizen Security Law (the so -called “Gag Law”) by the lower house of the parliament. The trend for vague “undefined legal concepts” that depend on subjective analysis with no clear distinction of what is right or wrong has been growing and could develop, if not stopped,” into even more worrying counter-terrorism strategies.

CIVICUS calls on the Council to stand up and provide leadership by ensuring and helping States to integrate compliance with their obligations under international human rights law into their legitimate efforts to stem the flow of terrorism.

Thank you

