

INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

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The Geneva Academy does not hold institutional opinions. Through providing a platform for research and policy recommendations, we assist and educate relevant stakeholders in any of the fields of our mandate.

The Geneva Academy established a platform in 2015 to address the issue of the use and consequences of the worldwide employment of IEDs. Furthermore, we sought to advance the international agenda in countering their impact.

Since its inception, our constant objective has been to focus on many IEDs-related issues, and in so doing to help fill what has been a failure of the international community to maintain coordinated discussions or actions on IEDs.

In particular, there is a need to address the legal aspects of IEDs. International humanitarian law is an insufficient body of law for this task since considerable part of IEDs' related attacks occur outside conflicts. Other bodies of law have also to be considered, such as criminal law. The impunity enjoyed by many perpetrators of IEDs-related attacks is a useful propaganda tool for their continued usage.

At its root, though, the problem is this: what is the best approach to tackle the global scourge of the IEDs? Who should take the lead? What role do diplomats, NGOs and international agencies play in combatting their spread? Should the leading experts be those specializing in IHL? Or should it be those with extensive experience in demining? What role do human rights have in the IED issue? What role does security or disarmament play?

When faced with such questions, what we have seen is that each sector and each actor seems to believe that their particular perspective is the most important. And yet, even with this self-confidence, we still see marked gaps. No UN agency particularly specializes in law enforcement. Interpol is notable for its absence from the policy debates. And the outcome of that today is this: there is no meaningful tool to address the threat from IEDs from the angle of law enforcement at the UN.

The newly established United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in New York could take the lead on common IEDs policies and actions.

This could work, provided that the Counter-Terrorism Office focuses meaningfully on all the issues at stake. This is a big ask, for such a unit could so easily give priority to security considerations, for instance, and in so doing disregard the human rights angle and in so doing exclude Geneva from the debate entirely.

During the Geneva Academy meetings one thing was spelled out loud and clear: there is a very real need for a system wide focal point with a specific mandate. This focal point could coordinate responses to the IED threat across the UN. The concern raised that the appointment a **“UN focal point or Special envoy on IEDs”** would be too costly, is, frankly absurd. The United Nations frequently creates *pro bono* positions, where only minor assistance costs are budgeted.

This is even truer if the position created is somehow linked to the CCW, and so the CCW’s secretariat takes on assisting this Special Envoy within its existing resources.

Going forward, the Geneva Academy will continue to facilitate dialogue and to raise specific policy recommendations, so as to effectively and quickly address the global response to the threat and harm of IEDs.

I thank you.