



Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe  
**Presence in Albania**

**HEAD OF PRESENCE'S REMARKS AT CLOSING EVENT OF PROJECT  
"PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND  
RADICALIZATION THAT LEAD TO TERRORISM IN PRISONS AND WITHIN  
PROBATION SERVICES (PHASE I)"**

*31 January 2020*

Dear Mr. Ibrahimimi,  
Dear Mr. Sojati,  
Dear colleagues,  
Dear Participants,

About one month ago, a man stabbed five people in Central London, killing two. Daesh has claimed responsibility for the attack. It soon emerged that the perpetrator had been convicted for terrorist offences before, and had spent time in prison. This incident is a reminder of how important countering radical views in prison is. It also shows that much remains to be done in this regard.

Recent research also shows that prisons can be hubs for radicalization. Overcrowding, deprivation, violence, harsh group dynamics and the need for belonging can be fertile grounds for charismatic leaders to recruit and radicalize fellow inmates.

However, serving time in prison can also have positive effects on convicts if it is handled properly. Evidence from Northern Ireland has shown that incarceration actually contributed to increased levels of political awareness and in turn to the de-radicalization of paramilitary prisoners. Studies conducted in British jails show that Jihadi prisoners tended to become more moderate in their views when exposed to other prisoners. In fact, some studies suggest that disengagement from radical views might occur more frequently than radicalization.

Whether viewed as a chance to de-radicalize terrorist convicts or as a dangerous breeding ground for radical views, there is no doubt that prisons play a significant role when it comes to tackling Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism. The OSCE, the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the international community at large have increasingly recognized this.

The OSCE Presence is committed to the full compliance of human rights standards at all times and an unwavering commitment to national and international laws. One of the key principles of the OSCE is an understanding of security that encompasses and guards human rights and the rule of law instead of pitting security and human rights against one another. In the context of prisons, this is a particularly sensitive issue.

Inmates convicted of terrorist offences and those who adhere to violent extremist ideologies create a new set of challenges that requires different approaches, policies and practices to manage and mitigate certain risks. Prison staff and probation officers are there working at the frontline.

To develop their skills, the Presence has trained about 250 prison and probation staff members on how to counter and prevent violent extremism.

In co-operation with UNICRI, we have prepared a Needs Assessment Report on P/CVE in prisons and probation settings.

The Presence improved the exchange of information and good practices regarding radicalization and terrorist threats in the prison system, and probation services between Albanian authorities and their regional counterparts. We do not want to reinvent wheels.

The Presence increased awareness among broader stakeholders about these problems and the respective human-rights based interventions, including the development of a university Master curriculum on P/CVE and six awareness-raising forums on violent extremism with young offenders on probation.

This project would not have been successful without the commitment and support of the National Co-ordination Centre on CVE, the General Directorate of Prisons and the General Directorate of Probation Service in the Ministry of Justice and the generous financial support of the Governments of Austria, Sweden, Germany, and Italy.

Through this continued co-operation, Albania's prisons can become grounds for moderation and de-radicalization we hope much more than for radicalization.

We stand ready to continue our support for the Albanian authorities in that field.

Thank you.