

Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa

“ It will not be possible for the United States to have an effective worldwide campaign against terrorism unless the threat is addressed in Africa.”

-Princeton N. Lyman

Introduction:

Before 2001, there were no designated foreign terrorist organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, political instability, lack of transparency, corruption, and weak political leaders have continued to hinder the development of democratic governments and the economies of countries located in this region. Beset by these weak governments, Sub-Saharan Africa has become a safe haven for many terrorist groups and throughout recent years, terrorism in this region has spiked up as an issue that is not easily tackled. With terrorism rising as a pressing global issue, the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) seeks to take on this problem in Sub-Saharan Africa before the threat expands to other regions.

A main issue with the growing terrorist organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa is the fact that there are many different types of groups. There are a few specific terrorist groups that should be discussed during committee among others:

- Al-Qaeda: The activity of Al-Qaeda and affiliated groups/persons have increased in South Africa and Nigeria, home to Africa's largest Muslim population. One group causing some troubles is Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). While compared to North and East Africa, the threat is still minor, the potential of Al-Qaeda's ideology taking flight is a very large danger as other terrorist groups are in existence.
- Al-Shabaab: Having announced its integration into the Al-Qaeda group in 2008, the Al-Shabaab group has grown in power recently in Sub-Saharan Africa. This region has become a safe haven for Al-Shabaab among many other terrorist groups.
- Boko Haram: This jihadist group has been a large threat in this region, especially in Nigeria. For years, the country of Nigeria has been in a struggle to defend its citizens. However, Boko haram has continued to re-emerge even after a large-scale assault by Nigerian security forces and the death of its leader and around 800 members in 2009. The leadership has also started to reach out to other jihadist groups in the region.

Background & History:

Sub-Saharan Africa is geographically the area in the continent of Africa that lies south of the Sahara Desert. The region includes all African countries that are fully or partly located south of the Sahara. It is in deep contrast with North Africa as they are considered part of the Arab World. In 2007, the population in this region was over 800 million with a growth rate of 2.3%. It is a region with very serious overpopulation problems and displays the most linguistic diversity in the world.

This region, vulnerable to shocks and many in a system of chronic poverty, has been battling terrorism for years. In the 1990s, terrorist groups emerged as many countries in the continent shifted towards independence in the postcolonial period. Terrorist groups were just one type of political violence. However, greater incidents started to occur. For instance, in 1998, al-Qaeda targeted United States embassies located in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with simultaneous truck bombs. This event killed 223 people and brought these groups to the world's attention. Within the past few decades, terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa has emerged as a greater trouble to a host of countries in the region, including Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda and brings concern to the international community. In 2008 there were reportedly less than 400 incidents of terrorism in the region. The number of incidents in 2012 rose to nearly 1,200. Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are now years into their struggle of defending its citizens, yet the threat of terrorism still grows, morphs, and spreads.

Current Situation :

The past couple years, Sub-Saharan Africa has appeared as an increasingly important front for terrorism. The first incidents were just the beginning. Terrorist organizations have built up its capacity and is operating within countries of this region especially within recent years. In 2013, Al-Shabaab demonstrated its capabilities after attacking the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi on September 21, 2013, leaving 65 people dead. And more recently, on April 14, 2014, attacks and the kidnapping of nearly 300 schoolgirls by the Nigerian group Boko Haram, captured top headlines and the world's attention.

More importantly, while sub-national and state terror still largely characterize the terrorist activity in the region, groups in Sub-Saharan Africa have also converged with global networks of terrorists in recent years. Starting with the integration of Al-Shabaab with Al-Qaeda in 2008 to the splinter group of Boko Haram, Ansaru, continuously collaborating with Al-Qaeda affiliated AQIM, as a result of current globalization and new developing technologies, international terrorism has grown outwards from this region. Sub-Saharan Africa seems to be the new battleground for a new war between terrorist organizations and countries.

Bloc Positions:

Many countries have started to become worried about the increasing problem of terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa. While some have developed clear positions on the topic, others are still not clear of a definite side. It is your job to accurately represent the position of your country and act on it.

Since the problem being discussed in committee is terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa, the countries within the region and surrounding it feel strongly regarding the growing threat. Most notably, the African Union has supported counter-terrorism through various plans and with the deployment of peacekeeping positions. The wider international community has also shown substantial support for counter-terrorism efforts, most notably the USA.

Committee Mission:

As mentioned above, this committee should try to find a possible solution to resolve the terrorist issues in Sub-Saharan Africa. Counterterrorism strategies have been in discussion and development within many countries already. It is imperative for the assembly to consider and address the current status of their country and the developing terrorist groups.

Questions to Consider:

- 1.) Where is your country located in relation to the region of Sub-Saharan Africa? Is the spread of terrorism into your country a concern?
- 2.) What are your ties to specific terrorist organizations taking control in Sub-Saharan Africa?
- 3.) What can the UN do to prevent an increase in activity of terrorist groups?

Sources for Further Research:

- Foundations for Defense of Democracies
<http://www.defenddemocracy.org/issues/sub-saharan-africa/>
- Sub-Saharan Africa Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sub-Saharan_Africa
- Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence
<http://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/jtr/article/view/824/703>