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## Launch in Iraq of the new STRIVE action

### **STRIVE Juvenile: Preventing and Responding to Violence against Children and Juvenile by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups**

12 July 2021 Baghdad, Iraq – The Government of Iraq, together with the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), launched the STRIVE Juvenile project in Iraq with the aim to develop and implement comprehensive national responses to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism affecting children and juveniles.

In the past years, the international community has been increasingly confronted with the phenomenon of the association of children and juveniles with terrorist and violent extremist groups. Iraq is indubitably one of the countries most affected by terrorism and so-called violent extremism in recent years. The Islamic State (ISIL) recruited thousands of children and juveniles in Iraq, using them as front-line fighters, as suicide bombers, to manufacture and plant explosive devices, conduct patrols, as guards and spies, and for a variety of support roles. Hundreds of foreign children and juveniles were also associated with ISIL, either traveling to Iraq alone or brought by family members.

Since 2019, the Government of Iraq has been implementing stabilization, reconciliation, and accountability programs to strengthen locals' ability to counter terrorist radicalization and recruitment. Nevertheless, many ISIL-alleged affiliated/associated children and juveniles remained in Iraqi custody along with Iraqi ISIL fighters. Therefore, the Government of Iraq has expressed the urgent need to tackle the situation of children and young people who are currently in detention for alleged affiliation/association with terrorist groups and has acknowledged that the promotion of their rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as the provision of fair and equal justice, are important to prevent future terrorist radicalization and violence.

Through the new STRIVE Juvenile project funded by the EU, the Government of Iraq, represented today by the Honorable **Mr. Ziad Al-Tamimi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice** and **Judge Laith Jabber Hamza on behalf of the High Judicial Council**, will closely work with UNODC, the executing agency, to strengthen national capacities to combat terrorist and violent extremism recruitment and exploitation of children and juveniles, while also increasing the resilience of vulnerable children and juveniles against terrorist groups agendas. Within the framework of UNODC's strong mandate and expertise in violence against children, justice for children and counter-terrorism, the Office has been addressing since 2015 specific objectives to increase the protection of children from terrorism and violent extremism and to ensure that children and juveniles are better served and protected by justice systems. Building on national ownership, the STRIVE Juvenile project in Iraq will support the country in developing coherent strategies that better serve and protect children and juveniles by enhancing safe and resilient communities and seeking alternatives to prosecution, by

prioritizing rehabilitative measures with the aim of reintegrating children and juveniles into society. The European Union acknowledging that children and juveniles can be extremely vulnerable to terrorist tactics, emphasized today the EU's commitment to fighting children recruitment and exploitation by terrorist and extremist groups which requires coherent and comprehensive measures. The EU Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Mr. Martin Huth, stated: "The joint EU-UNODC initiative, STRIVE Juvenile, supports efforts in Iraq to protect children from threats associated with terrorism and violent extremism."

Today's launch of the STRIVE Juvenile project in Iraq, is a sign of the strong partnership between the European Union, UNODC and the Government of Iraq, demonstrating their joint efforts to disrupt terrorist groups' recruitment of children and juveniles and promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have been associated with these groups, in full respect of human rights, gender equality and international law. Mr. Ali El-Bereir, Head of UNODC Office in Iraq, pledged "STRIVE Juvenile supports the Iraqi Government in its efforts to prevent child recruitment by terrorist groups, and to promote rehabilitation, reintegration and justice responses adapted to children and juveniles, bridging the gap between security interests and child rights."

1. *The Launch is co-sponsored by the European Union, the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.*

2. (741 words)

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4. Information [www.unodc.org/strive-juvenile](http://www.unodc.org/strive-juvenile) ; [www.unodc.org/endvac](http://www.unodc.org/endvac) ; <https://ct-morse.eu/projects/>

5. [E-Press Folder](#) ; [Factsheet](#)

6. ['UNODC Roadmap on the Treatment of Children Associated with Terrorism and Violent Extremist Groups'](#)

7. [Social Media STRIVE Juvenile Poster](#)

8. [Social Media STRIVE Juvenile Iraq Poster](#)

9. [Social Media STRIVE Juvenile Iraq Poster \(Arabic\)](#)