

Forum: Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Committee (GA3)Topic: Addressing the Issue of Motivated Attacks by Activists

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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Ileana Geroulanou and I am currently in Year 11 at St Catherine's British School. It is a great honour and pleasure to serve as your Deputy President in this year's SCMUN conference. Although I attended my first MUN conference only a year ago, it has become a big passion of mine and I look forward to being able to share it with you. For me, GA3 is one of the most intriguing UN committees as it deals with problems and impacts specific to people and humanitarian issues and I am thrilled to be able to experience it with you this year. Although this is my second time chairing, being in GA3 has been a long-term aspiration of mine and I hope that you enjoy it as much as I do.

I hope that you find this guide helpful and interesting and are inspired to come up with your own smart and detailed clauses so that we can have a fruitful debate. If you have any questions or any difficulties understanding the topic, feel free to email me at: <u>ileanageroulanos@gmail.com</u>

I'm looking forward to meeting you all this February!

Best Regards,

Ileana Geroulanou

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Motivated attacks by activists are defined as acts of violence and aggressive behaviour carried out by individuals or groups who are driven by a specific cause or ideology, in an attempt to draw attention to the issue they are fighting for as part of a political statement about their cause. They are usually caused by extremist beliefs when SCMUN24–Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee – GA3 [Page 1

activists are so deeply motivated in their actions that they are willing to do anything to continue to support and amplify them; this closely links with the idea of radicalization as there is a gradually increasing number of individuals supporting extremist views.

These acts of violence raise many security concerns, especially in terms of public safety, as when groups of people become aggressive, it often leads to innocent civilian harm which is a great risk, since it also often angers the targeted groups who commit other motivated attacks in retaliation.

However, not all activism is violent, so it is important to find a balance between freedom of speech and security to allow people to advocate for their needs in a safe and successful manner without the need to resort to aggression for a point to be made.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Activism

"Activism is the process of campaigning in public or working for an organisation in order to bring about political or social change."¹

Extremism

"The fact of someone having beliefs that most people think are unreasonable and unacceptable."²

Radicalization

"To convey the idea of a process through which an individual adopts an increasingly extremist set of beliefs and aspirations. This may include, but is not defined by, the

¹ Collins Dictionary . "Activism Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary." *Collinsdictionary.com*, 16 Oct. 2019, <u>www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/activism</u>.

² Cambridge Dictionary. "EXTREMISM | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." *Cambridge.org*, 2019, <u>www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/extremism</u>. <u>SCMUN24 –Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee – GA3 | Page 2</u>

willingness to condone, support, facilitate, or use violence to further political, ideological, religious or other goals."³

Boycotts

"To refuse to buy, use, or participate in (something) as a way of protesting."⁴

Riot

"A noisy, violent public disorder caused by a group or a crowd of persons, as by a crowd protesting against another group, a government policy, etc., in the streets; a disturbance of the public peace by three or more persons acting together in a disrupting and tumultuous manner in carrying out their private purposes."⁵

Terrorism

"Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups who are inspired by, or associated with, designated foreign terrorist organisations or nations".⁶

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Types of Activism

There are many different types of activism, some of these including protest activism, online activism, advocacy and lobbying, grassroots activism and civil disobedience. These are carried out in different ways, through protests or riots, and are used as a platform to raise awareness for a specific issue.

Initially, protest activism is a form of collective expression which involves public demonstrations, rallies and marches. Although they are often peaceful, it is likely for

³ UNODC. "Counter-Terrorism Module 2 Key Issues: Radicalization & Violent Extremism." *Www.unodc.org*, July 2018, <u>www.unodc.org/e4j/zh/terrorism/module-2/key-issues/radicalization-violent-extremism.html</u>.

⁴ "Boycott Definition & Meaning | Britannica Dictionary." *Www.britannica.com*, <u>www.britannica.com/dictionary/boycott</u>.

⁵ "Riot Definition & Meaning." *Dictionary.com*, <u>www.dictionary.com/browse/riots</u>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2023.

⁶ Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Terrorism." *Federal Bureau of Investigation*, 2023, <u>www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism</u>.

motivated attacks to occur during these as during all the commotion of the protesting, there is a diverse range which depends on the tone and nature of the objectives of the protest. Protest activism has played a pivotal role in historical significance, and has driven a lot of political and social change. For example, the civil rights movement and women's suffrage parades have been crucial to the shaping and development of society.

Another type of activism is online activism (or cyber activism), which refers to the use of digital technologies, such as social media, to promote certain needs or problems. It involves a wide range of activities, such as online petitions and campaigns, which aim to raise global awareness and support. The primary goal of cyberactivism is to influence public opinion by spreading information that will be easily accessible to the majority of the population which will join a group in advocating for change. However, even this comes with safety risks; a subset of cyberactivism is hacktivism which engages in activities such as website defacement or data breaches to further their cause.

Another form of activism includes advocacy and lobbying which focus on influencing stakeholders and governments to bring change to a specific cause. The primary objective is to build a platform of support to help shape public opinion, while simultaneously directly engaging with policymakers to influence policy decisions. Advocates and Lobbyists are elected representatives of different groups or organisations who are sent to persuade policymakers to adopt or reject legislation. Despite this being effective often, direct influence with the government could have a negative effect on the population if a group is advocating against the rights of another, especially if policies targeted against others are adopted since this could threaten community safety and promises of equality.

Lastly, another form of activism is grassroots activism which refers to activism that originates at a local level through volunteers who are driven and passionate about advocating for a cause. It is driven by the belief that change can be achieved by the collective effort of ordinary citizens who engage in community organising to build networks to create a sense of shared purpose between individuals.

Motivation and Causes

There are many reasons behind motivated attacks by activists, especially those influenced by their extremist beliefs, who are willing to go to any extent to fulfil their cause. A very common motivator is political ideology and nationalism because people who are very prideful in their country try to ensure that it is treated with respect, and often boycott to defend its name. This is a more common occurrence during times of conflict as activists want to raise awareness towards the protection of their country.

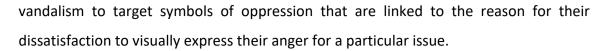
Linking to the idea of conflict, many attacks are motivated by revenge and wanting to defend a country's name when groups feel like they have been wronged by an international conflict to draw attention to the problem and emphasise a nation's reaction to the occurrence.

Another reason for attacks could be social reasons; either fighting against or for discrimination, many groups have put effort into fighting for the protection of what they believe is a basic right. For example, the civil rights movement fought for equality and during this time, many attacks were issued to emphasise the seriousness and need to solve the issue.

Lastly, many attacks are led by various environmental activist groups who riot for action to be taken against climate change and the protection of our planet to try and enforce new regulations and technologies to reduce the impact of greenhouse gases. The attacks are used to draw attention to activist groups in order for higher stakeholders and policymakers to get involved in the protection of the environment.

Tactics and Methods

Many different tactics are used during motivated attacks by activists, the most common being property damage. Vandalism is used to convey a message to express dissatisfaction by causing long-term and costly damage to buildings. It is usual for



Another notable method of attack is by hostage taking and sabotage which often leads to assassinations of innocent civilians and bystanders. This is done as a threatening form of encouragement to ensure that the needs and wishes of the group are being acknowledged. This is often associated with other armed attacks, including terrorism especially when the groups are attacking and fighting to defend and fight for a cause they believe in and do not acknowledge their mistakes, as it is situations like these that are most likely to result in casualties as they are initiated with an aggressive nature and motive.

Impacts

The most dangerous and harmful impact of motivated attacks is the loss of life or civilian injury. When a protest, or other event, begins to be aggressive, loss of life or injury is inevitable (depending on the scale of the problem) especially when activists have the motive to attack and harm. When citizens are trapped in an attack situation, this will likely result in psychological trauma for an individual, whether this happens after harm has been inflicted on them, or after watching a traumatising event, for the sake of communities, this is a problem that needs to be solved to help and prioritise civilian safety.

Another impact that is caused by motivated attacks by activists is economic problems; especially after vandalism and property attacks, the government (or building owners) have to invest a lot of their money for it to be fixed and repaired after the damage caused by activists.

Lastly, one of the biggest impacts is the humanitarian consequences on communities, aggressive attacks by activists (if raised on a large scale) can have large international repercussions such as conflict between nations and their contrasting views on certain issues. This also leads to the displacement of people who face discrimination and stigma



in their region because of international affairs that involve them, which increases the stigma faced by these people as new fear continuously gets created in them as they anxiously anticipate the outcome of an activist attack.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date of the Event	Event
4 May 1886	Haymarket Affair
	The Chicago Haymarket Affair occurred
	after a protest advocating for workers'
	rights turned into a riot after a bomb was
	thrown at the police. This riot resulted in
	the death of 8 people and created a huge
	setback for the organised labour movement
	in America.
4 June 1913	Suffragettes chaining themselves to metal
	railings
	A suffragette chained herself to the railings
	outside the British Prime Minister's front
	door while the Cabinet was in session to
	draw attention to her speech and the
	movement she was part of (fighting for the
	female vote).
1960-1970	Civil Rights Movement
	The Civil Rights Movement aimed to end
	racial segregation and discrimination
	against African Americans and to achieve
	social equality. The activists themselves
	rarely resorted to violence but protests
	were commonly converted into racially



	motivated riots by people opposing the	
	movement. Many segregationists were	
	angered by these protests so attacked the	
	African American community during	
	demonstrations advocating for peace.	
1996-2002	Earth Liberation Fronts (ELF)	
	In the span of 6 years, the Earth Liberation	
	Front (ELF) has committed nearly 600	
	criminal acts and caused around \$43	
	million in damages through property	
	damage, arson, sabotage, and vandalism. ⁷	
	Although their tactics emphasise attacks on	
	property and not people, their actions have	
	had detrimental effects on civilians who	
	have to fix all the damage that was caused.	
November 29-December 3 1999	have to fix all the damage that was caused. World Trade Organisation Protests	
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⁷ LEADER, STEFAN H., and PETER PROBST. "THE EARTH LIBERATION FRONT and ENVIRONMENTAL TERRORISM." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 15, no. 4, Oct. 2003, pp. 37–58, <u>https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550390449872</u>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2019.



	between the community and the police
	which further fueled activists' motivation,
	who continued to fight for the labour rights
	that they believed were deserved.
17 September 2011	Occupy Movement
	The Occupy Movement was a protest about
	economic inequality in America, it was held
	on Wall Street, and is known as a day of
	rage protest. 200 protestors were removed
	for noncompliance and violence during this
	protest.
2018-present	Extinction Rebellion
	The Extinction Rebellion was a theatrical
	display of how the climate crisis is causing
	death. 1700 arrests were made during the
	ten-day autumn uprising due to the
	aggressive nature of the activists
	participating in this protest.
6 January 2021	US Capitol Attack
	In 2021, there was a storming of the US
	Capitol by republican supporters of Donald
	Capitol by republican supporters of Donald J. Trump, who stated that the election was
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	facing jail time for obstructing official proceedings.
29 May 2022	Cake Thrown At Mona Lisa
	In 2022, a protester threw a cake at the
	painting of the Mona Lisa to draw attention
	to the problem of climate change.
17 September 2023	Climate Activists Spray Brandenburg Gate
	Last Generation climate activists sprayed all
	6 columns of the Berlin Brandenburg Gate
	with orange and yellow paint, causing
	short-term but lasting damage to the iconic
	sight. This group demanded the end of
	fossil fuel by 2030, and to show their
	dedication to the cause, turned to
	vandalism to prove the point that they
	wanted to get across to the government
	and high stakeholders.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America (USA)

The USA emphasises law enforcement and counter-terrorism efforts, such as the FBI counter-terrorism division, to deal with the issue of motivated attacks. The nation believes that a main priority is identifying and assessing threats to use departments, like Homeland Security, to coordinate efforts that protect against extremist violence. An American Civil Liberties Union has also been formed to protect the rights of all communities against motivated and directed attacks towards minorities, as well as enforcing hate crime laws such as the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 to create protections against violent acts.



United Kingdom (UK)

The UK has set up different extremism preventive strategies, as well as counter-terrorism units, to increase monitoring and surveillance during protests and activist events to reduce the likelihood of motivated attacks. Similarly, counter-radicalisation programs have been set up to locate and ensure that attacks by groups aren't attempted to reduce the amount of casualties and harm that these events produce. Another one of the nation's main focuses is cybersecurity and online monitoring to help with the prevention of hacktivism and digital attacks against minority groups by censoring websites with extremist and offensive views that target other nations. The UK has also set up the Institute of Strategic Dialogue which was founded to give policy advice and release articles on hate, discrimination and disinformation.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation has put together different counter-terrorism and extremism legislations, specifically the Federal Law on Extremist Activity which was adopted in July of 2002 to provide punishment guidelines to all non-governmental groups that engage in extremist behaviour. The nation has set up the Federal Security Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs to regulate the ongoing activities of activist groups, as well as internet and media regulations to control digital activist movements.

Greece

Greece has set up different security services and invests in community policing to reduce the impact and likeliness of motivated attacks by activists to occur. The nation has strict monitoring during protests, especially when they are held in very public spaces with lots of civilians. They have set up border security and patrols to reduce the entrance of more extremist groups. They also use Foreign Fighter Returnee Programs to help prevent the escalation of major issues, and to reduce the damage that the attacks could cause to communities.

Spain

Spain has set up different legislations and legal frameworks for the protection of civilians during activist attacks while using the National Intelligence Center (CNI) to investigate and set up different protocols that are dedicated to countering terrorism and extremism. The nation encourages community policing and outreach efforts to build trust and cooperation between groups to reduce the need for violent activism and attacks.

Türkiye

Türkiye has set up a National Intelligence Organization which organises initiatives to raise public awareness about the risks of extremism and violence, and programs to promote tolerance and diversity between groups to reduce the risk of conflict and anger which would lead to more organised attacks. They use border security as a critical aspect of preventing extremist infiltration and increasing national security especially since the nation has faced challenges related to foreign fighters that return from conflict zones which could cause problems between minority communities.

India

India is dedicated to reducing motivated attacks by activists, they have set up specialised law enforcement units and intelligence agencies which work towards counter-terrorism and counter-extremism efforts. Some laws and regulations address politically motivated violence to minimise one of the largest sources of the motivation that activists have for their attacks. The nation has set up the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to invest in and discover prevention strategies to reduce the number of violent attacks during protests.

Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)

The SPLC aims to track the activities of various hate groups, extremist organisations, and individuals with extremist ideologies and conduct in-depth research and analysis on their movements to expose the dangers of their actions through advocacy and public awareness campaigns. It uses litigation, a legal division that takes action against hate groups, to take aggressive activists to court so they can be held accountable for their



actions and receive the proper consequences which will help control the amount of motivated attacks.

Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)

The IEP published the Global Peace Index and researched the different forms of violence to develop their concept of "Positive Peace" which focuses on the attitudes and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. They use educational initiatives to teach policymakers and organisations to understand the drives of violence through data that can be analysed, so new policies can be adapted to sustain peaceful communities and activities.

Hedayah - The International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism

The Hedayah Centre is located in the United Arab Emirates and offers training programs and capacity-building initiatives to governments and communities. It is used as a platform to share practices that focus on countering online radicalization and extremist propaganda through publishing research reports, policy briefs and guidelines which have been developed through their collaboration with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and local communities.

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)

The RAN is a network that focuses on information sharing and collaboration through digital communication for a more quick and effective response time to problems. It has set up prison rehabilitation programs to educate and promote peace to perpetrators, while also developing new policies that recommend diversity and inclusion to prevent more motivated attacks from occurring.

Counter Extremism Project

The Counter Extremism Project is an NGO which was created to counter extremist ideologies, specifically hate speech and propaganda, and to advocate for new policies and measures to protect civilians from attacks by activists. It also collaborates closely SCMUN24 – Social, Cultural, and Humanitarian Committee – GA3 [Page 13]

with victims of activist attacks, by providing them with support but also by allowing them to share their unique experiences which will help provide a victim-centric approach to dealing with motivated attacks.



Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001)⁸

In 2001, the Security Council of the UN signed their 1373rd resolution due to the 9/11 attack that occurred in New York City when two terrorist-commanded planes crashed into the World Trade Center. After this event, the UN nations decided to take various measures to combat radicalism, including this resolution which aims to suppress support for terrorist activities to try and reduce the number of attacks.

UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime⁹

The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was signed to promote international cooperation to address organised crime and international attacks fueled by the same motivation (e.g. a conflict occurring in another country), especially when activist attacks stem from international disputes.

UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015)¹⁰

In 2015, the UN Security Council signed their 2250th resolution to promote peace and security through the youth by preventing conflict and extremism in different regions.

⁸ ----. Resolution 1373 (2001). 2001.

⁹ ---. "United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime." *Unodc.org*, United Nations, 2000, www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/UNTOC.html.

¹⁰ Nations, United. "Security Council, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2250 (2015), Urges Member States to Increase Representation of Youth in Decision-Making at All Levels | UN Press." *Press.un.org*, press.un.org/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm.



PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

An attempt that has been previously used to solve the issue of motivated attacks by activists is through government-led Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Campaigns which are overly broad and don't properly specialise in dealing with motivated attacks by activists. They don't effectively resonate with extremist ideologies which means that they aren't able to reduce the anger that motivates activists to go through with attacks and other violent activities, and therefore are unable to stop them.

Another ineffective solution to this problem is through governments' "see something, say something" campaigns which encourage the public to report any suspicious behaviour that they witness. This often leads to racial profiling, over-policing and extreme paranoia among communities. Many citizens get reported wrongly just because of the way they look or because of the peaceful minority groups that they come from due to other people's stereotyping and wrong accusations.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Community Engagement

Community engagement and collaboration are imperative to solving the issue of motivated attacks by activists, as good relations between groups are the first step towards a peaceful society as they reduce the need for violence to be used against individuals for a point to be made or proven. If radicalization is addressed at a local level, citizens can work on having good terms and reduce the need for extremist views. This engagement will also foster peaceful protests, as no one will have the urge or be motivated to carry out an attack that will harm the rest of the community.

Preventive Education and Awareness

Educating communities will help reduce the risk of extremist ideologies, as people will be aware of the consequences that attacks have on people, but also the consequences that would occur to the individuals who carried out the acts, which will reduce the urge to commit the crimes as many activists will try to keep their protests as peaceful as



possible to avoid the punishment. Awareness will also help train people to be able to recognise events of extremist attacks which can help them avoid them which adds to the idea of national security.

Counter-Extremist Messaging

Developing initiatives that challenge extremist propaganda, makes attacks less likely as it educates activists on the difference between advocating for a cause and enforcing damage on communities. These initiatives could provide alternative methods to protest peacefully, such as providing safe online resources, to reduce the exposure to attacks. Collaboration between former extremists can be promoted to help understand the ideology, to find the root cause of the issue and to have more effective solutions for attacks - one of these being reducing the number of police aggression which is another motivator of motivated attacks.

Early Intervention Programmes

Early intervention programmes can include an increase in security during protests, to be able to stop an attack from starting or escalating to the point where damage is made and people are hurt. Also, the banning of certain chemical weapons (such as tear gas) that are used during protest attacks can make it harder for a fight to break out since there are less accessible resources that can be used.

Legislations

Strict laws can be put into place to ensure that protests and activist activities remain peaceful; to enforce them more policing should be set up near active protests and should be aware of looking for potential illegal behaviour, and issue fines when necessary. Similarly, a ban should be placed on weapons at protests, and for fines to be placed when people are caught as a precautionary method.

Controlled protests make it less likely for any form of violence to occur, but this can also be done by enforcing strict punishments and fines on any rulebreakers to try and reduce the probability of attacks being initiated at protests.



International Cooperation

Furthermore, international cooperation is beneficial to reducing motivated attacks by activists because if nations work together by sharing research and solutions, it is more likely for effective strategies to be put into place and result in a peaceful global community, which then affects the motivation of activists as good relations between countries also means less bias and stigma against individuals which is a primary cause for the attacks and harm of individuals during protests.

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