



# Counterterrorism strategy for Switzerland

of 31 May 2024

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## 1 Introduction

Terrorism is a threat to world peace and international security, and as such it also threatens the peace and security of Switzerland and its interests at home and abroad. It threatens Switzerland's resident population, Swiss citizens abroad, basic rights, the rule of law and the democratic system.

Terrorists<sup>1</sup> seek to influence or change state and society by criminal means. They aim to achieve or promote their objectives by committing or threatening to commit serious criminal acts and by spreading fear and terror.

Switzerland aims to protect itself and its interests against terrorism. It fights it using all means at its disposal under the rule of law, while safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Switzerland is furthermore committed to ensuring that those guilty of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide are brought to justice. At the same time, it endeavours to resolve conflicts and support civilians through good offices, mediation and humanitarian aid.

Switzerland has been fighting terrorism for many years in coordinated efforts with its security partners at all levels, at home and abroad. Within its own borders, all levels of state are involved in fighting terrorism, coordinating their efforts to ensure the security of the country and the protection of the general public. This paper outlines established activities and processes and is intended to serve as a guideline for future action.

<sup>1</sup> The fight against terrorism is regulated in Swiss law in a number of decrees, namely in the Internal Security Act of 21 March 1997 (ISA, SR 120), in the Intelligence Service Act of 25 September 2015 (IntelSA, SR 121) and in the Swiss Criminal Code (SCC, SR 311.0). The terminology used in the legislation differs depending on the subject matter and purpose of the regulation. This strategy uses the terms 'presumed terrorist' (a person who is suspected of terrorism-related activities and against whom criminal proceedings have been formally opened) and 'suspected terrorist' (a person who is suspected of terrorism-related activities, but against whom criminal proceedings have not yet been formally opened).

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## 2

### Vision

No terrorist acts will be perpetrated in Switzerland. Its territory will neither be misused for terrorist financing, nor for the provision of logistical support or the planning of terrorist activities within Switzerland or abroad. Measures to fight terrorism will comply with the Federal Constitution and international law, and will be carried out with respect for basic and human rights. Switzerland will maintain a balance between freedom and security, giving precedence to freedom in cases of doubt. Internationally, Switzerland will be viewed as a trustworthy and prudent player that is committed to international law.

## 3

### Basis

Terrorism is fought with the means available under the rule of law. The prosecution of terrorist-related criminal offences is subject to federal jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup> Police response is generally a cantonal matter.

The federal government is responsible for safeguarding internal and external security. It is responsible for conducting criminal investigations and for investigating offences that are subject to federal jurisdiction. It is also largely responsible for border control. The federal government is also responsible for foreign policy and international cooperation in judicial, police and intelligence matters.

Switzerland complies with applicable international law, in particular the conventions and protocols of the United Nations (UN) and its specialist agencies as well as of the Council of Europe. It is also obliged to implement the resolutions of the UN Security Council. As a UN member state, it supports the organisation's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006 and has been regularly updated since then.

The UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy is based on four pillars: 1. Measures to eliminate conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; 2. Measures to prevent and combat terrorism; 3. Measures to build the capacity of states to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the United Nations system in this regard; 4. Measures to ensure the respect of human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis in the fight against terrorism.

<sup>2</sup> The prosecution of terrorism is primarily subject to federal jurisdiction (Art. 74 para. 6 IntelSA in conjunction with the General Ruling on the Proscription of Al-Qaeda, Islamic State and Associated Organisations of 19 October 2022 [BBI 2022 2548]). The criminal prosecution of terrorist phenomena of a different ideological nature is only subject to federal jurisdiction under certain conditions; see Article 24 paragraph 1 of the Swiss Criminal Procedure Code (CrimPC, SR 312.0).

## 4 Areas of action and goals

Switzerland is committed to combating terrorism and its causes both within its borders and abroad. It ensures national coordination among all players involved in the fight against terrorism and exchanges information actively and extensively with domestic and foreign partners. In the fight against terrorism, Switzerland is active in the following four areas:

- Prevention;
- Repression;
- Protection;
- Crisis management.

Switzerland pursues the following six strategic goals in the fight against terrorism:

### **Goal 1:**

#### **Switzerland prevents terrorism on its territory**

Switzerland prevents terrorists from operating on Swiss territory. This includes Swiss representations abroad, aircraft registered in Switzerland for international commercial air transport and ships sailing under the Swiss flag.

- Switzerland prevents terrorist attacks on its territory.
- Switzerland protects its population, in particular minorities with special protection requirements, its institutions and infrastructure from terrorist attacks.
- Switzerland prevents the financing of terrorism, the misuse of the Swiss financial centre for terrorism-related transactions and investments, and the collection and management of funds for terrorist purposes.
- Switzerland prevents presumed terrorists from using its territory as a safe haven.
- Switzerland prevents presumed terrorists from entering its territory whether through migration or by other means.
- Switzerland prevents the use of its territory for purposes of propaganda, recruitment and training for terrorist purposes or for any other activities for terrorist purposes.

### **Goal 2:**

#### **Switzerland prevents the export of terrorism from its territory and support for terrorism within its borders**

Switzerland prevents its territory and infrastructure from being misused to prepare or support acts of terrorism abroad.

- Switzerland prevents Swiss citizens or nationals of other countries residing in Switzerland from leaving the country in order to take part in terrorist activities.

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- Switzerland prevents the misuse of nationally based telecommunications services for the planning and execution of terrorist attacks.

### **Goal 3:**

#### **Switzerland supports foreign partners in preventing and combating terrorism**

Counterterrorism cannot be conducted in isolation, but must be carried out in an international network. It is only by acting jointly that the international community can effectively and sustainably combat terrorism. Cross-border cooperation is therefore of crucial importance.

- Switzerland is actively engaged in protecting the Schengen area.
- Switzerland plays an active part in international forums on preventing terrorist radicalisation and on combating terrorism and the financing thereof.
- Switzerland supports international organisations and other states that respect and protect human rights and international humanitarian law in building capacity to combat terrorism effectively and in accordance with the rule of law.

### **Goal 4:**

#### **Switzerland rejects terrorist blackmail**

Terrorists achieve their aims not only by carrying out terrorist acts, but also by simply threatening to do so. These threats often achieve the same effect with the use of fewer resources. Having made a threat (e.g. of an attack, hostage-taking, kidnapping or hacker attack on critical infrastructure), the perpetrators often go on to make demands. Many terrorist organisations fund their activities with ransom payments. States risk losing their freedom of action vis-à-vis terrorists once they have allowed themselves to be blackmailed. What is more, paying a ransom to organisations blacklisted by the UN Security Council is an infringement of international and national law.

- Switzerland does not pay ransom money in cases of terrorism-related kidnappings and hostage-taking. It also opposes all other attempts at coercion (e.g. the release of detained terrorists).

### **Goal 5:**

#### **Switzerland is capable of responding to terrorist attacks**

Even in Switzerland terrorist attacks cannot be ruled out. By strengthening the resilience of all state players, Switzerland ensures that it can cope with a terrorist attack.

- The Swiss authorities continuously and comprehensively assess security risks and vulnerabilities; they actively address (eliminate, reduce or accept) recognised risks and vulnerabilities, e.g. in the protection of critical infrastructure. Proportionality is applied as the guiding principle.
- Switzerland has a crisis mechanism at federal, cantonal and communal level that is capable of coping with terrorist attacks and their effects.
- The Swiss authorities engage in training and carry out regular exercises in order to be prepared for their joint tasks.

- Awareness within society is raised by adequate, specific information on potential incidents and the public is informed should an incident occur.

**Goal 6:**

**Switzerland is a reliable and prudent actor on the international stage, committed to international law**

Switzerland safeguards its international interests. In the fight against terrorism it is recognised by other countries as an active and competent partner that can be relied on to contribute to security in Europe and the world.

- Switzerland seeks to promote international law, in particular human rights, international humanitarian law and the rule of law, and to tackle problems at their root for the long-term. The UN's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy serves as the guideline for Switzerland's commitment.
- Switzerland works in particular to ensure that international humanitarian law is observed in armed conflicts and in the fight against terrorism. It is committed to ensuring that humanitarian services provided by an impartial humanitarian organisation such as the International Committee of the Red Cross are not criminalised, in accordance with Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.
- Switzerland actively contributes to strengthening the normative framework of the international fight against terrorism on the basis of the rule of law and democratic principles.
- Switzerland fights the root causes of terrorism and supports affected states in their efforts to build institutions based on the rule of law in order to combat terrorism effectively.
- Switzerland contributes to fighting the root causes of radicalisation by having an active peace policy, including engagement in mediation efforts and development cooperation. It maintains contacts to this end.

## **5 Measures**

Fighting terrorism is a task shared between the federal government, the cantons and the communes. National and international coordination is essential for the fight against terrorism to be effective, and is relevant to all strategic fields of action. Prevention, repression, protection and crisis preparedness are permanently and seamlessly interlinked. Foreign policy is linked reciprocally to each of these strategic areas of action.

The federal, cantonal and communal authorities responsible for combating terrorism are given the necessary resources to conduct the tasks assigned to them. They conduct training and regular exercises in order to be prepared for their joint tasks. The concepts, measures, resources and instruments required to prevent and deal with terrorist attacks are at their disposal.

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## **5.1 Measures in the four areas of action**

The strategic objectives are to be achieved in particular with the following measures in the four areas of action:

### **5.1.1 Prevention**

*Continuous assessment of the situation:*

- Monitor and assess the threat situation in Switzerland and abroad;
- Draw up situation development scenarios and establish the probability of their occurrence;
- Anticipation and early detection of new terrorist threats;
- Formulate possible recommendations.

*Security of Swiss nationals abroad:*

- Maintain an early warning system to monitor the international situation in order to ensure the security of Swiss nationals, diplomatic representations and interests abroad;
- Publish travel advice containing safety-related information and an assessment of potential risks and recommended precautionary measures.

*Prevention of radicalisation:<sup>3</sup>*

- Educational measures at school to create prospects and in vocational training to allow access to the labour market in order to combat (youth) unemployment;
- Measures in the areas of integration, religion, culture, social welfare and child and adult protection;
- Measures, e.g. awareness, violence-prevention and deradicalisation programmes, in prisons, youth centres etc.;
- Measures to identify and assess radicalised individuals in a societal and medical context, e.g. strengthening the link between deradicalisation and medicine, initiating scientific research and activities, creating or initiating forensic services.

*Relations with particularly vulnerable communities and minorities:*

- Maintain relations with representatives of particularly vulnerable communities and help them to detect radicalisation of individuals in their midst;
- Prevent discrimination and stigmatisation of minorities and promote their concerns;
- Create standards for the training of support staff.

<sup>3</sup> See also the 2023–27 National Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Radicalisation and Violent Extremism.

*Measures concerning cross-border travel (entry, departure and transit):*

- Issue entry bans and expulsion orders to presumed terrorists and persons convicted of terrorist offences;
- Order measures to prevent Swiss terror suspects and presumed terrorists from leaving Switzerland;
- Prevent unwanted entry, departure and transit of suspected and presumed terrorists through the active use of national and international information systems, questioning, surveillance, etc.;
- List suspected and presumed terrorists in international information systems (e.g. Schengen Information System [SIS], INTERPOL, Europol);
- Consider security aspects when assessing permission to stay in Switzerland and in asylum procedures.

*Legal and cooperative measures:*

- Consistently use preventive police instruments to combat terrorism,<sup>4</sup> i.e. mandatory reporting and preventive dialogue, contact bans, restriction and exclusion orders, travel bans, confinement to a property, electronic surveillance and mobile phone localisation;
- Examine additional measures restricting the availability and proliferation of firearms, explosives precursors<sup>5</sup> and other means used for terrorist purposes.
- Examine and enforce revocations of citizenship for Swiss dual nationals who have committed a serious crime in connection with terrorist activities and have received a final conviction of such, as well as refuse to naturalise suspected terrorists and terrorists;
- Actively engage in the exchange of information and cooperation with partners in Switzerland and abroad;
- Within the context of international cooperation, support other states in enforcing and ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law and in establishing effective and legitimised institutions aimed at preventing and fighting terrorism;
- Implement international sanctions relating to terrorism;
- Continuously review and possibly adapt the legal basis for preventing and combating terrorism and terrorist financing;
- Cooperate with operators of servers, messenger services, websites and social media networks, while improving the legal basis and strengthening regulation to curb the spread of criminal content that may nurture terrorist radicalisation and violence.

<sup>4</sup> Police measures to combat terrorism (PMT), see [www.fedpol.admin.ch](http://www.fedpol.admin.ch) > Terrorism

<sup>5</sup> Federal Act of 25 September 2020 on Precursors for Explosive Substances (SR 941.42)

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*Heightening awareness:*

- Provide sufficient general and targeted information on preventive measures to authorities, the media and the general public;
- Monitor new technologies and their potential use by terrorists (e.g. cryptocurrencies, drones, 3D printers).

### **5.1.2 Repression**

*Criminal prosecution:*

- Ensure consistent and timely prosecution, especially in cases involving support for and participation in terrorist organisations.
- Strengthen legal certainty by actively developing case law;
- Conduct operational case coordination between the Confederation and the cantons via single points of contact (SPOCs) at public prosecutor's offices and in police forces;
- Flag suspected terrorists in national and international police and intelligence information systems;
- Ensure coordination between adult and juvenile criminal prosecution authorities, involve counter-terrorism experts in juvenile criminal proceedings.

*Legal and cooperative measures:*

- Ensure active mutual exchange of information and cooperation in national and international administrative and legal assistance;
- Review criminal procedural jurisdiction between the Confederation and the cantons;
- Cooperate with financial intermediaries and non-profit organisations in prosecuting the financing of terrorism.

*Heightening awareness:*

- Provide general and targeted information on repressive measures to authorities, the media and the general public;
- Train and raise awareness among members of the law enforcement services in the area of violent extremism and terrorism.

### **5.1.3 Protection**

*Measures to help people at risk:*

- Protect society as a whole, but also individuals or groups of individuals (e.g. government officials, members of the Federal Assembly, particularly exposed public administration employees and members of the security forces);
- Measures to promote the security of minorities with special protection needs;
- Protect persons entitled to special protection under international law.



*Measures to protect facilities and objects at risk (protection of critical infrastructure):*

- Protect public buildings and facilities in Switzerland and abroad;
- Protect private buildings and facilities in Switzerland that are key to the functioning of society and of public life (transport infrastructure, event venues, historical and symbolic places, religious institutions, etc.);
- Protect foreign facilities in Switzerland which the country has a duty to protect under international law (e.g. foreign representations).

*Measures to prevent unlawful acts that could jeopardise safety on board Swiss aircraft in international commercial air traffic:*

- Targeted and risk-based deployment of aviation security officers in consultation with the Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA) and the Swiss airlines involved in Switzerland and abroad.

*Heightening awareness:*

- Provide sufficient general and targeted information on protection measures to authorities, the media and the general public.

#### **5.1.4 Crisis management**

*Preparations by the authorities for crisis and emergency situations in Switzerland:*

- Develop, consolidate and harmonise existing crisis management mechanisms to respond to terrorist attacks and their effects (police, armed forces, civil protection);
- Prepare and regularly update contingency plans to respond to terrorist attacks in Switzerland;
- Prepare and implement training modules for joint incident management;
- Conduct ongoing training in incident management at all levels, including complex attack scenarios and mass casualty incidents; Analyse current possibilities and identify shortcomings in dealing with numerous (seriously) injured persons in the event of an attack.

*Preparations by the authorities for crisis and emergency situations abroad:*

- Prevent and prepare for crises and emergencies caused by terrorism that affect Swiss nationals and the country's interests abroad;
- Provide assistance for Swiss nationals abroad (consular protection);
- Participate in search and rescue operations to help Swiss nationals in crises and emergencies caused by terrorism.

*Heightening awareness:*

- Provide sufficient general and targeted information on protection measures to authorities, the media and the general public.

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## **5.2 National and international coordination**

National and international coordination and interdisciplinary cooperation with other authorities and institutions play an essential role in effective counter-terrorism measures. This applies to all strategic fields of action and goals.

The Swiss authorities pursue the active exchange of information and close cooperation with partners at home and abroad in accordance with statutory requirements.

Switzerland has the necessary legal instruments at its disposal to cooperate with other countries in preventing and prosecuting acts of terrorism and acts supporting terrorism.

International cooperation between the security and law enforcement services at bilateral and multilateral level takes place with respect to the applicable international treaties and the international conventions ratified by Switzerland. The Confederation and cantons coordinate their measures with those of their partner authorities abroad, know the correct contact persons and form joint investigation teams where necessary.

Cooperation and coordination within Switzerland take place under the auspices of the federally run TETRA operational coordination committee, with the involvement of the cantons. The National Terrorism Committee is the Federal Council's political coordination body. Its task is to coordinate political leadership and communication between the Confederation and the cantons in terrorist situations. In the event of an incident, the national police command centre is responsible for the coordinating police resources and measures nationally.

## **5.3 Connection between foreign policy and areas of action**

Foreign policy is linked to all four strategic areas of action, each one closely interacting with the others. The following measures are particularly relevant to foreign policy.

*Participation in international platforms:*

- Ensure consistency in the various foreign policy areas in agreement with partners and in accordance with the needs of internal security (such as security, prosecution and border control authorities), international criminal law, international humanitarian law, peace and human rights policy, financial centre policy, security policy, development cooperation and humanitarian aid;
- Actively participate in international organisations on the prevention of terrorist radicalisation and terrorism (UN, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE], Council of Europe, Groupe d'action financière [GAFI], Global Counterterrorism Forum [GCTF], etc.);

- Promote international efforts and International Geneva as a hub for preventing terrorist radicalisation and combating the causes of terrorism (Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund [GCERF], etc.).

*Legal and cooperative measures:*

- Implement international obligations to combat terrorism and terrorist financing;
- Promote constitutional proceedings with regard to UN sanctions (listing/delisting);
- Ensure compliance with human rights international humanitarian law and refugee law in counterterrorism;
- Ensure the full effectiveness of humanitarian operations according to the binding principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

*Heightening awareness:*

- Provide sufficient general and targeted information on foreign policy measures to authorities, the media and the general public.

## **6 Strategy review**

The strategy is reviewed after four years and modified if necessary.