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The Current Terrorism Threat Environment & Emerging Risks in Victoria

Submission to the Department
of Justice and Community
Safety for Stage Two of the
Review of the *Terrorism
(Community Protection) Act
2003* (the Review)

Prepared by Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre

Date: 31 May 2021

Department of Justice and Community Safety

Submission: Stage Two of the *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003* (the Review)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Department of Justice and Community Safety as part of Stage Two of the review of the *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003* (the Review).

Our submission focuses on distinct gendered messaging towards men and women, the role of misogyny and hostile sexism in online radicalisation, the importance of a gendered perspective in counterterrorism (CT) and the interplay of misogyny and sexism as missing from likely future terrorist threats. We address the current terrorism threat environment and emerging risks in the state of Victoria, and what is potentially missing from existing considerations.

This submission also provides summary details of current and past research conducted by Monash GPS on gender and violent extremism.

Please find our submission attached to this letter.

Kind regards,

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Current and past research projects on gender and P-/CVE

The Monash Centre for Gender, Peace and Security has carried out numerous research projects on gender and violent extremism, many of which were in partnership with or funded by UN Women, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria. They have been summarised below.

Gender Constructs and Role Adoption in Violent Extremism (2019-2020)

Chief investigators: Alexandra Phelan, Jacqui True

Women play multiple roles in violent extremism, as sympathisers, mobilisers, logistical managers, preventers, and perpetrators. Existing research examines how these roles differ amongst far-left, far-right and radical Islamist ideological tendencies. However, it does not investigate or explain why violent extremist networks/organisations target men and women with gender-specific online messaging and recruitment strategies. The project addressed this knowledge gap by investigating how gender influences role adoption in far-right, far-left and radical Islamist networks, and how online gender-messaging challenges or reinforces these roles. The project investigates how gendered online messaging influences role adoption by 1) Mapping online content to produce a typology toolkit for intelligence/risk assessment including five types of gendered-messaging; and 2) Researching the three target groups via content analysis, legal analysis and interviews.

This research has produced three main research findings.

1. There are distinctive gender differences in the online messaging content of far-right, far-left and Islamist violent extremist groups in Victoria.
2. Far-right, far-left and Islamist violent extremist groups use gendered constructs to mobilise and recruit both women and men. Five gendered types were found amongst all three ideological tendencies, which frame the roles of women and men in their organisations and networks.
3. While role adoption among individual women and men affiliated with the groups is mostly complementary and consistent with the five types of ideological messaging, in some cases women and men demonstrated actually greater or less agency than predicted. In some cases, there was a gap between the espoused ideology and how individuals framed their rationale for involvement.

The findings of this research can be found in the following:

- Alexandra Phelan and Jacqui True, "Gender Constructs and Role Adoption in Violent Extremism: Toward a New Typology of Gendered Messaging in Australia", Research Report. Department of Justice and Community Policing, Victoria Government

Framework for a gendered analysis of countering violent extremism (CVE) policy and programs in Victoria (2019-2020)

Chief Investigators: Jacqui True and Helen Stenger

This project developed a framework supporting the application of a gendered analysis of countering violent extremism (CVE) policy and programs in Victoria (Framework).

The Framework will contribute to the increased effectiveness of policy and programs by:

- promoting gender sensitive practices in policies, program and service delivery
- facilitating an increased understanding of the experiences of women and men and their roles and relationships in relation to violent extremism
- ensuring Victorian Government staff who lead CVE policy and program development and delivery understand gender analysis and how to apply it and integrate it into their work.

Gender equality and violent extremism: A Research agenda (2017-2019)

Chief investigators: Jacqui True, Eleanor Gordon, Melissa Johnston

This research, undertaken as part of a broader project for UN Women, investigated the gendered dynamics of radicalisation in Libya and efforts to counter and prevent violent extremism. Based on new field data collected via a survey, this research found that misogynistic attitudes towards women and support for violence against women was the strongest factor associated with support for violent extremism in Libya. Furthermore, extremist groups in the region capitalised on gender dynamics to recruit men and women such as social constructions of masculinity and femininity, traditional gender roles and social and economic status of men and women. This research also sought to understand women's roles in preventing violent extremism in their communities. They found that women took it upon themselves to prevent and counter violent extremism by advocating for women's rights. Such women were often the first to be attacked by extremist groups.

The findings of this research project can be found in the following reports:

- Johnston, Melissa, Jacqui True and Zineb Benalla. *Gender Equality and Violent Extremism: A Research Agenda for Libya*. Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre and UN Women, 2019. <https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/11/gender-equality-and-violent-extremism-in-libya>
- Johnston, Melissa, Jacqui True, Imen Kochbati, Emna Jebblaoui, Slim Kallel, and Farid El Asri, *Gender, Masculinities And Violent Extremism In North Africa: A Research Agenda* <https://Arabstates.Unwomen.Org/En/Digital-Library/Publications/2020/01/Gender-Equality-And-Violent-Extremism-In-North-Africa-Studies>
- True, Jacqui, Eleanor Gordon, Melissa Johnson and Kerry O'Brien. *Building an Evidence Base for Empowering Women for Peaceful Communities: A Case*

Study of Bangladesh and Indonesia (Bangkok: UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2019). <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/02/building-an-evidence-base-for-empowering-women-for-peaceful-communities>

Misogyny & Violent Extremism: Implications for Preventing Violent Extremism (2019)

This research, undertaken as part of the 'Gender equality and violent extremism: A Research Agenda', investigated specifically *why* and *how* radicalisation to violence occurs from a gender perspective. In particular, this research brief analysed the underexplored relationship between attitudes and practices indicating misogyny (define as both fear and hatred of women and/or the feminine) and support for violent extremism. Gender analysis of survey data collected in four countries (Indonesia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Libya) provides evidence of a mutually reinforcing dynamic of misogyny and violent extremism.

This study produced three key findings:

1. Hostile sexist attitudes toward women and support for violence against women are the factors most strongly associated with support for violent extremism based on survey research in four countries in 2018-19. In three countries in Asia (Indonesia, Bangladesh and the Philippines) individuals who support violence against women are three times more likely to support violent extremism. Similar results were found in Libya. More than any other factor, support for violence against women predicted support for violent extremism.
2. There was no correlation at all between common factors thought to affect support for violent extremism – such as the degree of religiosity, age, gender, level of education achieved, employment, and geographic area.
3. Quantitative and qualitative analysis reveals misogyny to be integral to the ideology, political identity, and political economy of current violent extremist groups.¹

The research brief can be found here:

- Johnston, Melissa and Jacqui True. *Misogyny & Violent Extremism: Implications for Preventing Violent Extremism*. Research Brief. UN Women, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/10/misogyny-violent-extremism> UN Women, 2019.
- Bjarnegård, E., Melander, E., and True, J., November 2020, Women, Peace and Security: The Sexism and Violence Nexus, Joint Brief Series: New Insights on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) for the Next Decade, Stockholm: Folke Bernadotte Academy, PRIO and UN Women. https://fba.se/contentassets/46391654ca6b4d8b995018560cb8ba8e/research_brief_bjarnegard_et_al_webb.pdf
-

¹ The quantitative survey research took place in countries or areas with a Muslim majority and so largely reflects a study of Islamic violent extremist groups.

A Gender Sensitive Approach to Preventing Violent Extremism in Asia and the Pacific (2018-2019)

Chief Investigators: Jacqui True, Eleanor Gordon, Katrina Lee-Koo, Muhammad Iqbal, Melissa Johnston and Yasmin Chilmeran

In partnership with UN Women Asia Pacific, this research utilised qualitative (focus group interviews, key interviews, content analysis of extremist websites) and quantitative research (survey research of 3000 people) using agender analysis in Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines to understand why and how radicalisation to violent extremism occurs. It found that there was a strong relationship between support for misogyny and violence against women and support for violent extremism in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, extremist groups utilised regressive constructions of masculinity and femininity to recruit men and women, especially in online spaces (Johnston, True, and Iqbal 2020).

The authors recommended that P-/CVE measures must acknowledge and address the relationship between misogyny and violent extremism and promote gender equality interventions. They must also ensure that they do not inadvertently reinforce regressive gender roles by consigning women to the domestic sphere only. Furthermore, such policies should address the gendered harms of terrorism experienced by women.

The findings of this research project can be found in the following reports:

- Johnston, Melissa, Jacqui True, Eleanor Gordon, Yasmin Chilmeran and Yolanda Riveros Morales, 2020. *A Gender Sensitive Approach to Empowering for Peaceful Communities: Academic Paper*. Bangkok: UN Women 978-974-680-439-4 <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/academic-paper-a-gender-sensitive-approach-to-empowering-women-for-peaceful-communities#view>
- Johnston, M. F., Iqbal, M., & True, J. (2020). The Lure of (Violent) Extremism: Gender Constructs in Online Recruitment and Messaging in Indonesia. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 1-19.

Research Dialogue | Gender and P/CVE: the role of civil society organisations (2018-2019)

Chief Investigator: Jacqui True

This project was a collaboration between Deakin University and Monash University's Gender, Peace and Security Centre to facilitate a two-day Research Dialogue conducted during the Global Counter-terrorism Forum (GCTF) Countering Violent Extremism Working Group Plenary and Workshop on Gender and P/CVE: the role of civil society organisations.

The published documents can be found here:

- *Addendum to the GCTF Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism, with a Focus on Mainstreaming Gender*. Global Counterterrorism Forum, 2019. <https://www.thegctf.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=jA1tbXKhobE%3D&portalid=1> (Prepared by Jacqui True)
- True, J. Guidance Note: “Building Government-CSO Partnerships: Implementing Gender-Based Approaches to Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE)” Six Country Dialogue. Commonwealth of Australia, February, 2018. https://www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1779056/Building-government-Civil-society-organisation-partnerships.pdf

Preventing Conflict and Countering Violent Extremism through Women’s Empowerment and Civil Society Mobilisation in Indonesia (2016-2017)

Chief Investigators: Jacqui True and Sri Eddyono

This project addresses the lack of gender analysis in P-/CVE by investigating the links between women’s roles and perceptions, gender relations and the spread of fundamental ideologies and extremist violence in Indonesia. The researchers undertook nearly 100 interviews and focus groups with a diverse range of women. The results identified a clear link between fundamentalist political ideologies or groups and violent extremism. The project found that gender-specific warning signs, such as control over women’s dress, movement and religious practice, were one of the most critical early indicators of violent extremism. As such, the promotion of gender equality and tolerance was identified as one of the most crucial elements in combating fundamentalist ideologies and violent extremism. It was also found that whilst communities and governments often condoned fundamentalism, women exercised agency in preventing and countering violent extremism not only at home, but in public spaces. As such, the authors argue that rather than focus on the male-dominated approach of hard security, governments should be supporting women’s initiatives to prevent violent extremism.

The findings of this project have been published in the following documents:

- True, Jacqui and Sri Eddyono. 2021. Preventing Violent Extremism – What Has Gender Got to Do With It? Gendered Perceptions and Roles in Indonesia. *European Psychologist*, 26(1), 55–67.
- True, Jacqui and Sri Eddyono. *Preventing Conflict and Countering Fundamentalism through Women’s Empowerment and Civil Society Mobilisation. Research Brief*. Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre, 2017.
- True, Jacqui and Sri Eddyono. *Preventing Violent Extremism: Gender Perspectives and Women’s Roles*. Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre and Australian Aid Programme, August 2017.

1. Distinct gendered messaging direct towards men and women differently online, that fuels radicalisation and participation

Motivations for women and men to join violent extremist groups may be similar, but men and women participate in violent extremism differently and pathways in radicalisation are distinct.² Extremist groups tailor their recruitment strategies to appeal to the distinct motivations of men and women. The AFP has identified that both Islamist and Right-Wing extremist groups continue to pose a threat to Australia's threat landscape, and it is important to acknowledge that not only can women and men participate in violent extremism, but also that groups - including those in Australia - use distinct online messaging to radicalise and recruit.

Gender analysis allows us to critically examine how gender biases and stereotypes may affect our understanding of how women and men engage in violent extremism. Such analysis also sheds light on how gendered online-messaging plays a role in radicalisation to violence and is used deliberately by violent extremist groups to recruit women and men in distinct ways. In Monash GPS research, we examined gender constructs in online-messaging amongst extremist groups in Australia, and found that gendered messaging is not only pervasively used, but suggests the distinct role that both women and men should play in supporting the strategic and operational objectives of the group.

This project found that in Victoria:

- 1) There are distinctive gender differences in the online messaging content of far-right, far-left and radical Islamist violent extremist groups,
- 2) Far-right, far-left and radical Islamist violent extremist groups use gendered constructs to mobilise and recruit both women and men. Far-right and Islamist use very similar gendered messaging despite different ideologies. *Five gendered types* were found amongst all three ideological tendencies, which frame the roles of women and men in their organisations and networks. These are, "appeals to ideal traits", "appeals to/challenges to traditional gender norms", "appeals to protect", "appeals to domination" and "appeals to empowerment".
- 3) While role adoption among individual women and men affiliated with the groups is mostly consistent with the ideological messaging and five types, there was actually greater or lesser agency than predicted. In some cases, there was a gap between the espoused ideology and how individuals framed their rationale for involvement.

Our work on the gender-sensitive framework for CVE policy and programs in Victoria found:

- 1) "**gender identity**" refers to the personal concept of one's gender, which is non-binary and fluid. Gender identity can play a key role in driving an individual towards radicalisation, given that motivations for women and men can be similar yet experienced differently. For example, ingrained misogyny or injustices can serve as motivational factors towards violent extremism, especially when this

² Huey and Witmer 2016; Bloom 2013, 2012; Sjoberg and Gentry 2011; Nacos 2005

can include escaping from strict rules surrounding women's roles in their community or family. Consequently, joining a violent extremist organisation may be experienced as empowering for some women. As the content analysis research demonstrates, often it is the case that extremist groups appeal to gender identity within their recruitment technique, which is particularly the case when groups have specific online platforms for women and men.

- 2) **“gender power dynamics”** refer to the relational aspects of gender and the exploitation of gender stereotypes to influence radicalisation. Violent extremist groups may “shame” men into fighting and as a result appeal to their “masculinity” in an attempt to recruit them into the movement.
- 3) **“gender ideology”** refers to the ways in which far-right, far-left and radical Islamist ideologies are shaped by explicit gender norms and prescribe appropriate gender roles and behaviour. Both far-right groups and radical Islamist groups institutionalise relative degrees of gender segregation and difference, including traditional roles and benign and hostile sexist practices.

We concluded that societal gender identities and relations currently motivate men and women to join violent extremist groups both online and in real life.

We found whilst role adoption amongst both women and men was mostly complimentary and consistent to messaging on face values, in some cases there was actually greater agency or less agency than predicted.

2. The role of misogyny and sexism in radicalisation and recruitment online

Our research has also found that misogyny, sexism and hostile beliefs towards women is present in the ideology of some violent extremist groups operating or exerting influence in Australia. For example, it is well known that the Sonnenkrieg Division- which is Australia's first listed far-right terrorist organisation- justifies and legitimises sexual assault, violence against women and rape in their propaganda. There is a growing recognition of the relationship between gender identity and violent extremist ideology, and policymakers are beginning to take into account the gendered dimensions of radicalisation and violent extremist groups. In our examination of far-right extremist online content, it revealed that misogynistic, racist, bigoted and homographic grievances were not only present, but that gender identity and (in some cases) misogyny was also integral to extremist beliefs. We found that certain gender dynamics actually drove radicalisation and played a key role in influencing and sustaining involvement (Phelan, True and Johnston 2020).

In another project, survey research and analysis by Monash GPS in Indonesia, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Libya has established a clear link between misogynistic attitudes, support for violence against women and support for violent extremism (Johnston and True 2019; also Johnston, True and Benalla 2019; Johnston et al. 2020) The research modelled the results of surveys of over 3145 people in the four countries between 2018 and 2019. There are three major findings from the model:

1. People who have *hostile sexist attitudes* are far more likely to support violent extremism. Hostile sexism describes open antipathy to women, or misogyny. It

is associated with fear of women's leadership and of feminism, tolerance for sexual harassment of women and generalized distrust of women. People who purport hostile sexist attitudes are over four times more likely to support violent extremism than people who strongly disagree with these attitudes, holding all the other variables in the model constant.

2. There is a significant relationship between support for violence against women and support for violent extremism. Respondents who agree with attitudes of violence against women were more than four times more likely to support violent extremism than people in the sample who disagree with the type of violence holding all the other variables in the model constant.
3. People with attitudes supportive of harmful traditional practices more than four times more likely to support violent extremism compared with those who strongly disagree with such attitudes. Harmful traditional practices are forms of violence that have been committed primarily against women and girls in certain communities and societies and that have been considered or presented by perpetrators as part of accepted cultural practice (OHCHR 2020).

Our research finds that hostile sexism and support for violence against women are the factors most strongly associated with support for violent extremism. Women's experiences of violence may influence them to either reject or support violent extremist groups. Extremist groups seek to stigmatise changing gender roles and use threats of gender-based violence and female dishonour because they see empowered women as a threat.

The link between misogyny and violent extremism applies not only to the countries we have researched above, but also to far-right extremist groups operating in the West. One recent example includes Brenton Tarrant who targeted a Christchurch mosque in 2019. An analysis of his manifesto highlighted the link between violent extremism and misogyny, racism, homophobia and other forms of bigotry and discrimination. Unfortunately, P-/CVE measures in the West often target Muslim communities with little regard to the growing threat of white supremacist violence (True, Chilmeran and Johnston 2019), which suggests an important area of research where more funding is required.

We found that the link between violence against women, misogyny and violent extremism have implications both at an *individual level*, and *macro societal level*, which should be taken into consideration when examining existing threats and policies.

Individual-level implications

Violence against women, not just attitudes supportive of violence, could be a triggering factor in recruitment. For example, in our research on Libya we found that forty-two percent of respondents agreed that domestic violence was also a factor motivating women to join violent extremist groups (Johnston, True and Benalla 2019: 20). There is other research that outlines the relationship between violence against women and violent extremism. McCulloch et al. (2019: 5), found that that terrorist attackers who

perpetrate the attack alone ('lone wolf actors'³) tend to have a history of violence against women. Hamm and Spaaij's (2017: 53) research demonstrates that "interpersonal conflicts" may trigger the perpetration of terrorist attacks. This finding - interpersonal conflicts triggering 'public' violence - also questions research investigating 'turning points' of when individuals turn to commit terrorist violence, because perpetrators may have already been violent towards women before (McCulloch et al., 2019: 5).

Macro-level implications

Some violent extremist groups widely promote male dominance and women's subordination in their political propaganda and in their efforts to recruit new members. We propose that gender factors (anti-women backlash and a preference for a sexist gender order) can connect individual support for violent extremism with the politics of violent extremism. The gendered goals of violent extremists are surprisingly similar, and speak to both reactionary conservatism and violence against women. In a global survey of over 1600 women's rights advocates, respondents describe the common negative impacts of religious fundamentalisms as including: limitations on health and reproductive rights, reducing women's social, political, economic and bodily autonomy, and increasing rates violence against women (AWID et al., 2015). Capitalizing on such sentiment, resurgent populist, alt-right, and reactionary movements foment backlash against women's rights as part of their branding (Cohen et al., 2018; Goetz 2019). Extremist propaganda in Indonesia, for example, advertises male supremacy in private and public spheres; men's (violent) control over reproduction; practices harmful to women and girls including child marriage, female genital mutilation, and polygamy; and limiting women's access to human rights in family law (Johnston, True and Iqbal 2020).

Based on the link between support for violence against women and misogyny, and support for violent extremism, we have made several recommendations:

1. that support for violence against women and misogyny may be considered a key risk factor in individual men and women's support for violent extremism.
2. that greater attention be paid to the political *content* of gender inequality, a preference for a particular gender order as a driver of individual support for violent extremism.⁴
3. that states and institutions collect evidence on individuals perpetrating violence against women, including VAW prevalence surveys in line with states' obligations under the Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW),⁵ to inform efforts to counter and prevent violent extremism (Johnston and True 2019). Caution should be taken to mitigate the risk of securitizing women's participation with consequent effects for women's safety and agency.

³ This term is not widely used anymore, because most of the times these individuals had some sort of connection to a broader (online) network and did not act entirely 'alone'.

⁴ We analyse gender inequality at the level of individual belief, complementing and extending Caprioli's (2005) argument that gender inequality leads to greater rates of conflict within states.

⁵ DEVAW obligates state parties to "promote research, collect data and compile statistics, especially concerning domestic violence, relating to the prevalence of different forms of violence against women and encourage research on the causes, nature, seriousness and consequences of violence against women and on the effectiveness of measures implemented to prevent and redress violence against women; those statistics and findings of the research will be made public." United Nations. *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*. A/RES/48/104, 20 Dec 1993.

3. The importance of a gender-sensitive approach to P/CVE from terrorist risk assessment to community programming, including likely bespoke treatment of women repatriated from former ISIS territories

Given the potential future repatriation of women and children from ISIS territories, it is important that P/CVE programs are gender-sensitive and understand that unique gendered dimensions that could affect disengagement and deradicalization. Recently, women's and gender perspectives have begun to be considered in counterterrorism policies. Ultimately, understanding the different roles and capabilities of women as actors is an important entry point for engaging communities in dealing with and preventing violent extremism and terrorism. It is important to understand that women and men can be actors and simultaneously victims of violent extremism.

However, policymakers should be aware of some concerns regarding the impact of P-/CVE programs on women and mothers:

1. P-/CVE measures may be guided by stereotypical, racialized and essentialist notions about women and their inherent peacefulness, passivity and domesticity. By assuming that women are peaceful, and as such, that they can positively influence violent men in their families and communities (Winterbotham and Pearson 2016: 56), and by organising programming that trains women on how to do so, these P/CVE initiatives instrumentalise women and securitise their relationships with their families and communities, compromising their security. Research participants in the Philippines, Bangladesh and Indonesia felt that violent extremism was in part caused by the undermining of traditional gender roles in the home, such as the “stay-at-home, ever-vigilante and self-sacrificial mother” (Johnston et al. 2020: 30). We therefore recommend that P-/CVE measures should avoid limiting women’s roles to the domestic sphere.
2. A designation of certain community as “radical” community in the implementation of P-/CVE measures may lead to the marginalisation of that community. This is because it is seen as the source of national insecurity and threat (Shepherd, 2020). This is particularly the case within predominant Muslim countries and in countries where Muslims form a minority group. Women may be highly impacted by these stereotypes and labelling not only because of the intersectional nature of gender, but also due to women’s existing unequal social position in the society.
3. As P-/CVE programs are relying more on women to perform “the early warning system” and “inside mediators” roles in the family and communities, there is a tendency to shift responsibility to prevent and counter violent extremism from the state to civil society, especially to mothers (d’Estaing 2017). This, in turn, has led to several impacts, including blaming women for failing to prevent the recruitment of the male family members to violent extremist groups (d’Estaing 2017), losing funding for civil society working on women, peace and security that fail to comply with countering terrorism and violent extremism programs (Heathcote 2018) and the implementation women’s empowerment programs that are addressed only to access vulnerable men (Brown 2013).

Ultimately, involving women in P-/CVE program should not neglect the importance of eschewing gendered assumptions that lead to an overbearing burden of responsibilities on women to counter/prevent violent extremism.

GPS Research has highlighted that return and reintegration policies should pay attention to the gendered experiences of women and men in violent extremist groups. Some factors that should be considered in the case of female violent extremists include:

- The care of their children who may have experienced trauma and violence themselves (Johnston and True 2019).
- Women's relative marginalisation and lack of resources (Johnston and True 2019).
- Possible experience of SGBV: Framing women as perpetrators of violent extremism should not dismiss their possible experiences of SGBV, given how prevalent it is in extremist groups (Stenger and True 2019). Monash GPS has recommended that women, men, girls and boys should be screened for possible victimisation and receive the necessary support, including treatment, justice for crimes suffered where possible, and protection from further abuse whilst in detention (Johnston and True 2019). This process should account for the fact that experiences of SGBV often carry stigma and shame, raising doubts as to whether many women will come forward (Stenger and True 2019).

Recent research has highlighted that the experience of detention is also gendered. The ongoing crisis of detention camps in Syria illustrates the gendered threats that women and girls face as ISIS detainees, which according to the UN meets the threshold for torture under international law (OHCHR 2020b). After ISIS' downfall in late 2019, about 12,000 foreign women and children live at the refugee camps and 1000 FTFs detained at Syrian Democratic Forces prisons. These women and children are now living in camps in Al Hol, Al Roj. Their fates depend on the political decisions of their origin states to repatriate them back to their countries.

Countries' refusal to repatriate women and girls and the subsequent stripping of their nationalities neglects the fundamental human rights of women and children in displacement. Some countries have extended their revocation measures to include children. Australia withdraws citizenships from minors from the age of 14 (Cook and Vale, 2019: 32). Similarly, in Denmark children born to "ISIS parents" in Syria and Iraq do not receive Danish citizenship (Hoffman and Furlan 2020:14). Without protections from the state and without visible prospects of returning to their home countries, these women and girls are subject to the "deprivation of their property, goods and services and deprivation of their rights to return to their homes of origins as well as by violence and insecurity" (UN Women, 1995). Furthermore, stripping citizenship and ignoring citizens in detention may not be effective in the long run as the camps will not exist indefinitely (Renard and Coolsaet 2020: 8). There is the chance that detainees might flee the camps or will be transferred to the Syrian authorities. Ultimately, for children and girls, the non-repatriation policies will have dire impacts on the full realization of their rights to education, health care and participation in post-conflict environments. Furthermore, living in the camps could further expose them to radicalisation and the unrelenting chain of internalising extremist beliefs.

In repatriating foreign fighters, some countries have implemented policies which enable young children to be repatriated, but not their mothers. For example, whilst Indonesia initially allowed mothers and children to be repatriated, a recent shift in this policy has occurred in early 2020, where now only children under the age of 10 are being repatriated (Widiastuti 2020). This leads to the separation of mother and child at the border, and such custody policies appear to be justified under the assumption that the mother will continue to indoctrinate the children at home. The controversy arises as to whether separation is in the best interests of the child, as separating the mother from the child has been dubbed “psychologically disastrous” for children (Birnbaum 2019). Monash GPS research maintains that both the mother and child should be repatriated together. In terms of rehabilitation programmes for returned foreign fighters it is crucial to consider that challenges are gender-specific. For example, formerly detained women have a higher unemployment rate and are often caring for children. Women also face greater stigmatisation from society because they not only support(ed) terrorism but also breached gender norms (Brown 2020b: 6, 10).

To take an effective gender-sensitive approach to C/PVE measures, we recommend:

- CVE risk indicators and programmes must reflect the diverse experiences of women and men.
- CVE programming should incorporate understanding of masculinities and femininities to provide more empowering narratives. It should identify ways to promote women’s agency and opportunities for community and societal participation and voice.
- A gender-based approach is needed to address the societal gender identities and relations that motivate men and women to join violent extremist groups both online and in real life. Victoria should identify the communities where returnees will be returning to, prepare them and ask for their needs. This includes educational initiatives providing a gender-perspective to radicalisation processes and stigma.

Appendix A: Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre

Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre (GPS) is a research centre focused on issues of gender, peace and security. Our vision is to build globally recognised, gender-inclusive research evidence to deliver peace and security globally. We seek to use our research to inform scholarly debate, policy development and implementation, and public understanding about the gendered nature of insecurity and the search for peace. In addition to research with international, government and industry partners, community engagement with civil society, and academic publications, Monash GPS academics engage in undergraduate and graduate teaching, executive education and PhD supervision.

Members of the Monash Gender, Peace and Security Centre are engaged in:

- **Australian Research Council funded research** – competitively awarded programs of research that provide independent, high-quality research to advance the national interest, with GPS researchers undertaking major projects on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, violent extremism and fragile situations and women’s participation in peace processes and post-conflict societies.
- **Contract research and consultancy** – including on gender and violent extremism and terrorism and political violence.
- **Policy development** – including on gender mainstreaming in the security sector, the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Asia and the Pacific and the Preventing Violent Extremism agenda.
- **Evaluations of programs and reforms** – including large-scale multi-sector development and security reforms
- **Expert lectures, seminars, industry briefings and opinions on gender, peace and security family** For further details about current and recently completed research projects, please visit the [Centre Research webpage](#).

Additional Sources

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