

Speech by

President Abdel Fattah El Sisi

President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

At The Arab-Islamic-American Summit

Riyadh, May 21, 2017

My brother, His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz...The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and the King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Your Excellency President Donald Trump, The President of the United States of America

Your Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies,

Allow me at the outset to convey to you the greetings of Egypt, with its Muslims and Copts, its extended civilization through thousands of years, its land, which was the meeting point of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, and its outstanding contributions to the history of humanity and science, till it became a symbol of moderation, and enlightenment.

Our meeting today, in addition to its political importance, bears a symbolic value. It reflects our firm resolve to renew the partnership between Arab and Islamic countries, and the United States of America. This shall dispel the illusions of the clash of civilizations advocates, who only envision the relation among peoples as a conflict in which one side aims to eliminate the other. They fail to recognize the real purpose of the civilizational and cultural diversity, which allows for the enrichment of life and human experience, by elevating the values of cooperation, tolerance, acceptance of the other and respect for his right to differ.

You may agree with me that there is a definite interest for all of us in the entrenchment of these human values. We also have a key role in countering the causes of divisions, conflicts and extremism, and I mean precisely the danger of terrorism that has become a formidable threat to the peoples of the entire world.

Your Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies, Countering the threat of terrorism and rooting it out require, in tandem with the security and military measures, a holistic approach that encompasses political, ideological and developmental aspects. However the real question which needs to be seriously and frankly addressed: How could this holistic approach be implemented on the ground and on what basis?

Allow me to offer four important elements in this regard:

First, talking about countering terrorism in a comprehensive manner means confronting all terrorist organizations without discrimination. It is not possible to reduce the confrontation to one or two organizations; all terrorist organizations are active on a cancerous network and are inter connected in most parts of the world by numerous bonds, including ideology, funding, as well as military, security and information sharing. Therefore, it is not feasible to limit the confrontation in one operation theater without the other. The success to eradicate the threat of terrorism requires a confrontation with all terrorist organizations in a comprehensive and simultaneous way on all fronts.

In this regard, you all know that Egypt is fighting a ferocious war against terrorist organizations in northern Sinai. We continue to make victories and steady progress and are keen on maintaining their pace and scope so as to root out terrorism with the least damage possible, while protecting civilian lives.

Our battle is part and parcel of the global war against terrorism. We are committed to defeating the terrorist organizations and extending a helping hand as well as partnership to all allies in the fight against these organizations everywhere.

Second, a comprehensive confrontation with terrorism necessitates a confrontation that addresses all dimensions of this phenomenon, including funding, arming, as well as political and ideological support. A terrorist is not only the one who carries arms, but also the one who trains, funds, arms and offers a political and ideological cover.

Let me speak frankly and ask: where are the safe havens that are offered for terrorist organizations to train their fighters, treat their wounded, and make changes and replacements of their equipment? Who buys from them the natural resources they control, like oil? Who is involved with them in the trade of antiquities and narcotics? Where do they receive the financial donations from? How are they offered media presence through media outlets that have accepted to become a propaganda platform for terrorist organizations?

Everyone who does that is a key partner in terrorism. Unfortunately, there are countries involved in supporting and funding terrorist organizations and in offering them safe havens. There are also countries that refuse to share information that they have and database of the foreign terrorist fighters, even with the Interpol.

Your Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies, The third element of the Egyptian vision to confront terrorism is the termination of the terrorist organizations' ability to recruit new fighters through a comprehensive approach at both the ideological and intellectual levels. The fight against terrorism is primarily an intellectual fight. A successful confrontation with the terrorist organizations must include paralyzing their ability to recruit and attract sympathizers by their distorted interpretations of the teachings of the religions. These interpretations contradict with the religions' tolerant essence and deviate to fit political purposes.

You probably all recall that two years ago I proposed an initiative to renew the religious discourse that would lead to a comprehensive cultural revolution, which would illustrate the true essence of tolerant Islam and confront attempts to hijack this religion and confine it to misinterpretations and pretexts that justify crimes that our religious teachings do not tolerate.

I am following up on the implementation of this initiative with the established religious institutions in Egypt, on top of it Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, which represents the reference to moderate Islam, and in cooperation with intellectuals and scholars in the Arab and Islamic worlds. I am confident that this aspect is not of less importance than operational confrontations to eradicate terrorist organizations.

Your Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies,

Last but not least, it is inevitable to admit that the prerequisite condition for terrorist organizations to grow is the disintegration and instability of national state institutions in our Arab region.

It is no secret that we faced in the past years heavily funded systematic attempts to disintegrate our countries' institutions and to put the region into destructive vacuum. This created perfect conditions for the emergence of terrorist organizations and the exhaustion of our peoples in sectarian and ethnic conflicts.

Filling the vacuum, in which terrorism grows and proliferates, requires exerting every effort to restore and reinforce the unity, independence and efficiency of national state institutions in the Arab region. This includes fulfilling the peoples' aspirations and will for their country's progress. This shall take place by dedicating political, economic and social reforms, committing to the standards of good governance,

respecting human rights , reinforcing the concepts of the rule of law and citizenship, respecting women and empowering the youth.

Over the past few years, Egypt has set a historic example to restore its national state institutions in a peaceful and civil manner by effectuating the sweeping popular will that rejected all attempts to hijack the established Egyptian state and its national identity that was formed throughout Egypt's history. After regaining their state, the Egyptian people continue to build and enhance the capacity of the state institutions, achieving progress day after day at the different levels of political economic and social reforms.

Egypt also fully supports all efforts aimed at resolving the region's crises so as to maintain the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the national states and to protect them from the forces of extremism and sectarian fragmentation. Egypt categorically rejects all attempts of foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of Arab and Islamic countries or attempts to fuel sectarianism, which provides a fertile ground for the proliferation of terrorism and the collapse of the national state.

Egypt also believes that resolving the Palestinian issue through a just, comprehensive and final solution will provide a tangible new reality for the region's people and will enable them to enjoy prosperity, peace and security, in addition to eliminating one of the pretexts that terrorists use to justify their horrendous crimes. This comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue should be based on the two-state solution and relevant international resolutions.

Your Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies, I wanted to share with you the four aspects on which Egypt's counter-terrorism vision is based, out of our conviction that terrorism is the biggest threat that we all face. The comprehensive approach, based on the four aspects that I have mentioned, ought to lay the foundation for a new phase of cooperation among our countries and peoples.

I would like to express my appreciation for the insightful vision of President Trump, who has proposed since assuming office a robust policy to address the challenges of terrorism, which he confirmed before us today. I have no doubt that the US is capable of creating a much needed international momentum in terms of implementing the comprehensive strategy that I outlined today. This is in order to formulate a clear action plan with a designated time frame to root out the funding and arming of terrorism and to deprive its networks from their safe havens. This includes effectively confronting movements that conceal and market themselves as political entities, when in fact they foster terrorists and infiltrate societies and seize the opportunity to prey on the popular will to practice their extremist and exclusionary policies.

Egypt has always been a pioneer of peace and open to various peoples and cultures and the Egyptian people will always precede to lend a helping hand and communicate with all their friends and partners in the region and the entire world.

May God lead us to what is in the best interest of our peoples.

Peace Be Upon You.

##