The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Carnegie Middle East Centre held an expert group meeting on Security Sector Transformation in Arab Transitions: Working for Change. The meeting was held at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 17 and 18 December 2012, and was attended by representatives of Governments, security services, civil society and research centres, in addition to human rights activists, researchers and academics.

The aim of the meeting was to establish a forum for dialogue, exchange and cooperation between civil society, security sectors and other relevant actors, focusing on national and regional leadership in all reform and transition processes, especially in the security sector.
CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Paragraphs</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. General recommendations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Recommendations for Governments</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Recommendations for the organizers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. OPENING OF THE MEETING</td>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION</td>
<td>15-45</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Security sector reform: A key requirement for democratic transition</td>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Reforming and transforming the security sector: Concepts, goals,</td>
<td>19-40</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approaches and strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Changes in security sectors in Arab countries and the international</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community: Eliminating current approaches servicing donor agendas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

1. Undoubtedly, the Arab uprisings have highlighted the failure of state security services in establishing their social and political legitimacy. Authoritarian security services that overbearingly control public life and state affairs without accountability result in political instability, violence and the deterioration of human development. There is therefore an urgent need to reform and transform security structures, practices and mindsets to achieve progress in democratic transitions, especially in countries that have been undergoing political and institutional changes since 2010. Security sector reform in those countries would lead to the following results: security institutions and forces being held accountable by democratically elected civil political authorities; security services confirming their commitment to protecting human rights, the rule of law and the principles of financial transparency; and building security sector capacities and experiences at the operational levels. It is not possible to establish responsible security services, capable of working effectively to serve civilians and States, without achieving those results.

2. The re-evaluation of the relationship between Governments, security services and their foreign counterparts is a key dimension of desired transition processes. To date, security sector reform has been fundamentally linked to donor agendas. National security interests have not been prioritized in foreign assistance programmes. Past international approaches in all Arab countries that adopted such programmes, especially in Iraq and Palestine, have led to an increase in security risks or have not tackled the root causes of problems. They also proved their inadequacy because of weak planning and coordination, divergent priorities and weak adherence to commitments to secure resources. In addition, strict focus on counter-terrorism capacity-building by international agencies, concentrating only on purely technical aspects, impeded the adoption of a comprehensive unified approach to security sector reform and rebuilding efforts in affected countries. Given the unsatisfactory results of foreign programmes and interventions, it has become apparent that security sector reform must be undertaken through national leadership and comprehensive plans that cover all reform dimensions, including human rights and political, institutional and technical issues.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The meeting resulted in a number of recommendations, divided as follows:

A. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

4. The following principles and standards must be applied to any security sector reform process:

- Principles of the rule of law;
- Neutrality of security services;
- Transparency;
- Accountability and responsibility;
- Participation.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENTS

5. Security sector transformation and reform procedures must be implemented under the following themes:

1. Security doctrines

- Changing the concept of “public security” to “public service” to ensure that the foundation of security doctrines is the service of citizens;

---

1 The recommendations are presented as submitted by working groups or participants.
• Affirming that performance monitoring and measurement are the basis for evaluating security sectors;
• Affirming the civilian nature of security sectors rather than their military nature, and re-evaluating training curricula and employment regulations on that basis;
• Ensuring that citizens only have to deal with police and public security forces by prohibiting intelligence services from approaching them;
• Eliminating security screening systems and good behaviour certificates issued by security services (instead of police records), except for government jobs that require such procedures in accordance with transparent legislation.

2. Strengthening legal frameworks
• Reviewing the foundational laws of security sectors and their components so as to ensure that they comply with general principles and standards and with democratic security doctrines;
• Reviewing the job descriptions of those working in the security sector to ensure clarity and avoid overlap and conflict;
• Strengthening the role of interior ministries in managing and overseeing security sectors, reviewing interior ministries’ powers and structure and distributing responsibilities as necessary;
• Reforming and developing the judiciary to improve the effectiveness of security sectors, and identifying the responsibilities of prison administrations and reforming them.

3. Providing regulatory controls
• Moving from a confession-based system to an evidence-based system in criminal law;
• Prohibiting violence and torture during interrogations and developing clear regulatory controls;
• Developing clear and transparent systems and regulations to control the treatment of citizens by security services;
• Prohibiting commercial activities for all staff working in the security sector and its institutions.

4. Developing professional capacities
• Developing physical and moral standards for selecting security sector personnel and officers;
• Evaluating training methods and curricula in military and police academies;
• Rehabilitating security personnel and officers in accordance with new principles and standards;
• Providing necessary equipment, applying advanced techniques, modernizing divisions and facilities, and identifying those responsible for their use and maintenance;
• Increasing the number of women working in the security sector and empowering them professionally at all levels.

5. Ensuring accountability
• Establishing parliamentary committees to monitor police and security forces so as to ensure more accountability;
• Establishing or empowering grievance bureaux and reviewing their legal frameworks to ensure efficiency and independence;
Implementing audit processes and government control mechanisms regarding security sectors, to ensure that legislation and human rights are respected and financial and administrative standards are met in all activities;

Introducing human rights in the training curricula of police and military academies;

Ensuring compliance between domestic legislation and international human rights standards;

Acceding to relevant international treaties, ratifying them and lifting any reservations;

Drafting and distributing codes of conduct to all relevant departments, in collaboration with citizens, to ensure transparency in conduct;

Incorporating relevant international treaties in the training curricula of police and military academies.

6. **Improving services**

- Developing legislation, systems and mechanisms that protect the legal rights of security personnel in the course of duty;
- Affirming the right of subordinates to refuse to obey illegal orders from their commanders;
- Developing complaint mechanisms for subordinates abused by their commanders;
- Enacting legislation to establish unions for those working in security sectors to protect their rights and improve their situations;
- Improving salaries, medical benefits and child education allowances, among others;
- Improving working hours and paying for overtime work.

7. **Building trust between security sectors and civilians**

- Establishing an opinion poll unit under the security sector to gauge public opinion with regard to security services, as a tool for measuring and evaluating performance;
- Changing official uniforms to cement the idea of reform and transformation among citizens, and placing insignia on uniforms indicating the names of security personnel and officers to enhance transparency and trust;
- Opening up to the public by informing them about activities, reforms and changes, in collaboration with civil society, to assess problems, requirements and suggestions.

C. **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ORGANIZERS**

( Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Carnegie Middle East Centre )

6. The following recommendations were issued for the meeting organizers:

- Establishing an Arab network for institutions involved in reforming security sectors, which includes civil society organizations, research centres and regional bodies to coordinate and exchange experiences and expertise;
- Holding a forum to adjust and clarify concepts, especially the distinction between the concept of security and the security system;
- Organizing workshops and training sessions on security sector reform, covering the following:
  - Sessions for the training of trainers aimed at government institutions in willing countries;
- Training workshops for civil society;
- Workshops and expert group meetings on legislation, training, oversight and gender-based approaches\(^2\) for security sectors;

- Organizing a forum that builds on the outcomes of the current expert group meeting, resulting in clear conclusions and comprehensive plans for inclusive training;
- Compiling studies, papers and guidelines on security sector reform and disseminating them among participants at the present meeting and other stakeholders, through an electronic mailing list, website or facebook page;
- Facilitating communication between government organizations by appointing liaison officers, in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Carnegie Middle East Centre;
- Presenting studies and recommendations regarding the Council of Arab Interior Ministers;
- Developing electronic communication methods for meeting participants (mailing lists, online forums, websites);
- Organizing periodic follow-up meetings.

II. OPENING OF THE MEETING

7. Representatives of the Carnegie Middle East Centre, ESCWA and the Lebanese Ministry of Interior and Municipalities gave opening statements.

8. Mr. Paul Salem, Director of the Carnegie Middle East Centre, affirmed the importance of reforming and transforming security sectors in Arab countries, especially following the Arab uprisings, given the affiliation of security sectors to former authoritarian regimes and the various roles they played in repressing or supporting the uprisings, or simply remaining impartial. Security sectors were now expected to fall under and protect civil and democratic political systems, rather than pose a risk to them. He added that the future of security sectors in the Arab region affected all citizens (civilians and security personnel) and that the best way to build safe democratic societies, which strike a balance between the ballot box and the security sector, was through the exchange of experiences and constructive dialogue. The current expert group meeting made a humble contribution towards security reform, democratic progress, economic growth, social justice and strengthening the security of Arab citizens.

9. Mr. Nadim Khury, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA, gave a statement in which he affirmed the urgent need to review the role of security institutions following the Arab popular uprisings. He noted that weak and unsustainable progress in terms of human development and gross domestic product growth, freedom of speech violations, lack of accountability and effective political participation and unequitable public institutions had contributed to triggering those uprisings.

10. The speaker also said that protecting the regime and maintaining stability came at the great expense of human, social and economic development. Indeed, the level of government military spending in the Arab world was more than double the world level. He stressed that the time had come to reform legal systems related to security sectors by applying the following two principles: civil authorities must monitor security services; and those services must be held accountable for their actions.

11. The speaker finally affirmed that supporting transitions towards democracy or political reform required indicators to measure the progress made in reforming security services and ensuring the rule of law.

\(^2\) Gender-based approaches set out the social roles of men and women in society, the requirements for eliminating discrimination and the need to achieve gender equality and empower women.
Research into those measurements and methods to identify existing gaps were needed, so as to enable decision-makers to formulate effective policies to tackle shortfalls. He added that ESCWA was developing good governance indicators for the Arab region on the basis of its specificities.

12. The representative of the Lebanese Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities, Mr. Bayar Nassar, underscored the important role of Lebanon in security sector reform, in the light of the fundamental changes taking place in the Arab region to secure democracy and ensure that institutions respected civil freedoms and human rights. He urged security services to seriously commit to the reform process, in collaboration with Governments and civil society, so as to develop clear and systematic strategies that met popular aspirations and ensured the rule of law.

13. He affirmed that reform could not be achieved without sincere intentions, hard work and collaboration between all segments of society, so as to secure stability and continuity. He stressed the important role of legislative institutions in implementing reform and the great responsibility that leaders would have to bear in terms of oversight, liability rules and punishment for violations. He also noted the role of the judicial authorities in fighting corruption and supporting the reform process.

14. He concluded by stressing the need for cooperation and communication between countries, organizations and civil society institutions in all aspects of the reform process, especially security sector reform, to achieve the following goal: national security services who conducted themselves in a professional manner, implemented transparency and enshrined freedom as a basic human right.

III. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

A. SECURITY SECTOR REFORM: A KEY REQUIREMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

15. Participants shared the roles and experiences of security sectors before the unrest and during the Arab uprisings that had begun at the end of 2010, especially in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen, where the role of security services was no longer to keep the peace, but rather to protect regimes that saw citizens as a threat, therefore going beyond their remits as set out in laws and constitutions. Foreign relations with security services were limited to counter-terrorism efforts, with no real regard for human rights and differences in donor agendas, as was the case between the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

16. Participants discussed the expectations and goals of security sector reform following political transitions in Arab countries. They stressed that security was a direct reflection of political will, and underlined the need for security services to change from “secret organizations” that were above the law to impartial public service institutions that were not governed by any political agenda or doctrine. Those institutions must be accountable and subject to scrutiny and evaluation; and must adopt a doctrine founded on the service and protection of civilians through a human rights approach. They underscored the importance of developing mechanisms to stop leaders from using security services to snatch the reins of power or illegally remain in power. They also discussed the differences between security and military services; and the possibility of separating them, its effects on political and institutional transitions and its contribution to strengthening democracy.

17. Participants presented the difficulties of reforming the security sector, agreeing that there were complex challenges that covered the functional, structural, legislative and social levels. They also agreed on the difficulty of achieving state neutrality in Arab countries, especially in security services, and on the important role of legislation to ensure such neutrality. They discussed the challenges linked to transparently providing economic and social immunity to security personnel, without violating democratic principles or human rights. They also noted the challenge of eliminating friction among the security, military and civil sectors, which would require cultural and behavioural changes.
18. The representatives of Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia and Yemen gave a detailed account of the security services in their countries, setting out their roles prior to and during the uprisings and explaining their current situations and the difficulties they face.

B. REFORMING AND TRANSFORMING THE SECURITY SECTOR: CONCEPTS, GOALS APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES

19. Participants were divided into working groups to discuss the concepts, goals, approaches and strategies related to security sector reform in the Arab region as a whole, and in countries undergoing uprisings and political transitions in particular. The outcomes of the working groups were presented in plenary.

1. Concepts

20. Participants affirmed that security sector reform required a review of the concepts and reference frames that governed security services at the political, constitutional, legal and technical levels, as well as the social and cultural levels, including the culture of societies, individuals and of security services themselves. The reform process should take into account all institutional, political, structural and social frameworks linked to security services, including external factors that could affect reform, especially at the present time in the Arab region.

21. Participants discussed security sector reform, not in its narrow sense related to police work, but in its broader sense, covering human security and placing citizens at its core. They did not adopt a specific definition of security but agreed the need to discuss the issue from all its dimensions, including citizens, their rights and the concept of citizenship; and to adopt a vision stating that safety and security were human needs and human rights, and were therefore broader than simple physical security.

2. Goals

22. The main goal of security sector reform was facilitating democratic transitions, implementing the rule of law, protecting human rights and securing development.

23. Participants discussed transitions that resulted in reform and change, without asserting that the transformations taking place in the Arab region were tantamount to democratic transitions, which had been the aim of the Arab uprisings. The citizens’ main demand was indeed to build a modern civil and democratic State founded on human rights, the separation of powers and constitutional legitimacy.

24. Participants focused on bridging the gap between citizens and security personnel and eliminating the lack of trust between them, which was an issue of sociocultural nature. They said that security services would be protected by enhancing the internal, economic, social and cultural strengths of police and other security personnel. There were clear and accurate systems that allowed them to form unions and practice their rights, including their right to a hearing in case of injury, but also ensured that they did not abuse their powers.

3. Approaches

25. Participants agreed that there was a need for various approaches, depending on countries’ specificities. Countries suffering from political divisions required a different approach than those witnessing occupation or conflict. In Palestine, for example, security sector reform was affected by pressure from donor countries to meet the needs of the occupation rather than those of Palestinian citizens. Uprisings in some countries weakened security services thus creating instability, making security a short-term priority to allow citizens, civil society and political parties to carry out political processes without pressure, intimidation or fear.
26. Participants affirmed that security reform must be a comprehensive national process, driven by national needs and priorities, and founded on domestic visions and agendas incorporating external support.

27. They also confirmed the need to separate security services from political parties to ensure their independence and compliance with constitutions and laws, and to guarantee impartial treatment of all political parties or social groups. Security services must be subjected to scrutiny and held accountable for their actions, including purchases and budgets. Civil society must be empowered to scrutinize security services to ensure respect for democratic and constitutional principles. Constitutions should clearly define the concepts of independence and impartiality, enshrining immunity and protection on the one hand; and responsibility, accountability and oversight on the other hand.

28. Following a discussion on experiences in Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen, participants concluded that it was sometimes difficult to reach political consensus to develop common visions and strategies. That difficulty posed additional challenges for the reform and the establishment of security institutions, which were formerly being controlled directly by Heads of States in some countries, thus operating outside constitutional limits. Reform must therefore begin by separating security services from political systems because security sector reform was not possible without political reform, nor without the political will to adopt a human rights approach and ensure constitutional democracy.

29. Participants also discussed the general framework for transition procedures, affirming the need to include institutional, legal and cultural measures to facilitate the reform process. They highlighted the need to eliminate the acrimonious and adversarial relationship between security institutions and “revolutionary” groups, so as to achieve reconciliation through transitional justice measures that were outside the scope of the current meeting.

30. Participants stressed the importance of security sector reform for development, by providing a secure environment for economic, social and human development and altering spending to meet the needs of national development plans.

4. Strategies for security sector reform

31. Participants agreed that security sector reform required complete political reform and that drafting new constitutions or amending existing ones included aspects linked to security sector reform, such as the constitutionalization of rights or the development of constitutional democracies founded on justice and the power of constitutional courts, and the constitutionalization of rights and obligations related to security reform. Considering that the lack of state and security sector impartiality was a former major problem for Arab countries, constitutions must contain general principles that ensure their impartiality and allow for security sector oversight by authorities accountable to executive and legislative powers. It should be noted that constitutional reforms do not omit the need for technical and institutional reforms, but rather provide necessary reference and political frameworks for their implementation. Reference should also be made to previous reform processes when developing new plans for security reform so as to benefit from positive aspects and avoid past mistakes.

32. Participants agreed that ensuring the impartiality of security sectors and transforming them into general services for citizens by subjecting them to oversight and accountability could face resistance from certain social groups, such as those loyal to the former regimes or new groups with agendas that were not compatible with security reform or transition towards constitutional democracy. Another type of resistance to reform also existed in terms of individuals and groups within security services that benefitted from the current situation to serve their personal interests, in addition to other difficulties such as foreign agendas linked to security sectors that were not always compatible with domestic agendas.

33. Participants said that strategies to reform security sectors must be founded on a common national vision for security and the internal and external risks that threatened countries and societies, taking into
account the different political and social structures in each country. On the basis of that vision, it would be possible to structure security services; determine their doctrine, reference frameworks, missions, relationships among them, their number, their requirements and their work methods; and identify the responsibilities and roles of their members to guarantee effectiveness and avoid overlaps.

34. In addition to the above, participants discussed a number of fundamental issues regarding security sector reform, including the following:

(a) Subjecting public posts to efficiency and competency standards rather than political interference and nepotism;
(b) Determining terms of reference and responsibilities;
(c) Lifting impunity from security services to make them subject to scrutiny, accountability and evaluation;
(d) Identifying standards that govern security institutions and presenting those institutions as government services for citizens;
(e) Determining political and legal references to set out and monitor the work of interior ministries.

35. Participants agreed that interior ministries must have a civil reference and be subject to political and non-political oversight. They highlighted the need for members of security services to participate in security sector reform and development, within a clear reform framework with appropriate legislation.

36. Several participants suggested a series of steps related to interior ministries to achieve reform and transformation goals, including reducing interior ministries’ burdens to allow them to focus on security, and reforming police forces that protected human rights and acted as a link between security and judicial sectors. They also suggested completely separating the responsibilities of interior ministries and security services, or establishing two deputy interior minister posts, one for police affairs and the other for civil affairs, as is the case in Palestine. They reviewed a proposal to establish national committees to monitor the work of interior ministries, comprising members of parliaments and experts from rights organizations, which would submit annual reports on the work on interior ministries. Interior ministries also required ethics codes and ethics committees with mixed membership from within and outside the security sector.

37. Participants discussed developing the role of police from forces that repressed disputes to preventative forces, by establishing new community police services comprising members of the community they policed. Some participants said that that might lead to pressures from communities which could affect the work and transparency of police forces, especially in countries where tribal, religious and ethnic identities overrode societies and political systems.

38. Participants reviewed the situations of security services in their countries, especially in Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen, and confirmed the need to build the capacities of those services and put in place other measures to succeed in security sector reform.

39. Participants noted that, in countries that underwent political transitions, security personnel faced difficulties in adapting to changes in their responsibilities and the manner in which citizens viewed them. Citizens’ perceptions of security personnel should be changed through education and awareness-raising campaigns; however the main change factor was the improvement of security personnel conduct.

40. Participants stressed the need to improve services, benefits and salaries received by security personnel so as to improve their conduct. They suggested including the following steps within the security sector reform plan:

(a) Re-evaluating security personnel training procedures;
(b) Offering academic rehabilitation to security personnel in terms of dealing with people;
(c) Subjecting recruitment mechanisms for security personnel to competency standards;
(d) Providing counselling services to security personnel;
(e) Incorporating human rights into military academies’ curricula;
(f) Modernizing police departments and introducing new technologies;
(g) Supporting border guards and assisting them in securing borders to combat smuggling;
(h) Improving officer selection processes.

C. CHANGES IN THE SECURITY SECTOR IN ARAB COUNTRIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY: ELIMINATING CURRENT APPROACHES SERVICING DONOR AGENDAS

41. A plenary session was held in which foreign experts and diplomats participated. They reviewed issues related to the practical relationship between security sector reform and donors, and ways to benefit from the experiences and models adopted in other countries.

42. Participants agreed that it was not possible to import ready-made models and apply them in Arab countries, but it was possible to identify elements that met countries’ needs through a selection process conducted by stakeholders, so as to develop new models that met the specificities and requirements of individual countries. Security sectors were founded on experiences and cultural, intellectual and social factors. Security institutions not built on those factors were destined to fail.

43. They reviewed the Northern Irish experience, considering that there were similarities between the war there and the situation in some Arab countries. Security sector reform in Northern Ireland began with a political settlement and the establishment of an independent committee to study the security sector and issue proposals and recommendations. Potential opponents were isolated and police and political parties were tasked with implementing the process themselves, supervised by an external committee and subject to a stringent accountability system.

44. Participants discussed several security reform approaches, noting the “broken windows” approach that implemented small reform initiatives that finally resolved the main security sector problem, which was normally an extension of small problems scattered throughout the sector. For example, security personnel who do not receive their salaries on time, or who do not earn enough to live comfortably, would not be influenced by training sessions and initiatives to improve their conduct.

45. With regard to donors, it was impossible to separate between donor countries and their foreign policies, which use funding as a means to influence beneficiary countries in terms of protecting or ousting the current regime or focusing on counter-terrorism measures, all of which were linked to political agendas. In the Arab region, parties that controlled spending were those that made decisions, especially regarding security sector reform. Participants noted that, in some cases, grants and loans lined the pockets of political cronies, thus promoting corruption. They also indicated the presence of new donors in the region, especially Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Turkey.