

DELIVERING IMPACT IN MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

In March 2023, the Strong Cities Network launched the MENA Regional Hub to offer cities a dedicated team of local experts to support city-led approaches to preventing and responding to hate, extremism and polarisation and connect cities across the region with human rights-based and gender-sensitive good practices from across the global network.

Key Figures

112

Individual Stakeholders Engaged

13

Member Cities

27

Mayors/Local Leaders Engaged



“This Strong Cities roundtable provided invaluable insights, enabling me to gain a deeper understanding of Iraq’s CVE strategy.”

Bassem Yaqoub, President of Tel Kaif District, Iraq

Mapping City Needs and Good Practices

The Regional Hub regularly consults mayors and other local government officials to better understand their concerns, the threats they face, any existing approaches and resources, and their key needs when it comes to developing prevention capabilities. The Hub’s work has been shaped by the priorities cities have raised since its launch. These include:

- Supporting greater sensitisation among national and local stakeholders to the role of cities in preventing and responding to hate, extremism and polarisation.
- Delivering technical capacity-building and thematic awareness-raising assistance to leverage existing and/or develop new local infrastructure, processes and networks to prevent and respond to these challenges.
- Strengthening National-Local Cooperation (NLC) to build coordinated and sustainable prevention efforts.



“The national government ... grants local governments the mandate and ... urges cities to embrace this chance, take proactive steps and work on local CVE action plans and start implementing. It is essential to develop projects and initiatives that address the specific needs of your communities, enhancing their resilience against violence, extremism, hatred and retaliation.”

Ali Abudllah Badiri, Chair, Iraqi Committee for Countering Violent Extremism

Strengthening City-Led Prevention

The Regional Hub's support to cities has included leveraging resources from Strong Cities' Technical Support Fund, guidance from the Hub and advice/learning from peers across the Network and through the Strong Cities' Expert Pool. This support is delivering significant impact, including:

- In **Baghdad** (Iraq), the Hub partnered with Iraq's National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism (NCCVE) and the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) to convene a two-day workshop in May 2023, focused on operationalising a whole-of-society approach to prevention. The event gathered more than 35 key national and local stakeholders to highlight the need for developing NLC, raise awareness of governorates and cities of national efforts and make clear that the National Strategy supports a mandate for local governments in hate and extremism prevention. The Hub is now working with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq to support the implementation of local prevention plans of action in six local government areas.
- In **Rabat** (Morocco), the Hub's Inaugural Workshop convened more than 70 city officials and practitioners representing 27 localities across the region to identify city prevention needs and priorities. These include those related to engaging young people, women and marginalised communities and managing challenges associated with climate and conflict-induced migration. Rabat, Marrakech and Oujda have since become Strong Cities members, with the Mayor of Rabat also serving as co-chair of the Network's International Steering Committee.

Elevating Local Voices

Strong Cities raises the voices, perspectives and needs of mayors and the cities they represent directly with national government, regional and multilateral partners to inform prevention policies and programmes at all levels.

- The Hub facilitated the participation of the city of **Marrakech** (Morocco) in an IOM workshop in Iraq to share learnings with counterparts in Iraqi cities in an effort to ensure local action planning incorporates good practices from across the region.
- The Hub held online roundtables for practitioners across the MENA region to continue to identify good practices and obstacles cities face in developing and delivering prevention efforts.
- In September 2023, the Hub supported the participation of Lara Youssif Zara, Mayor of Alqosh, Iraq, in the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) Coordinating Committee Meeting in New York to allow GCTF members to hear directly from local leaders on their role in P/CVE and facilitating the localised implementation of relevant international frameworks.
- In September 2023, the Hub supported the participation of 15 mayors and other local government officials from six countries across the MENA region in the Strong Cities Fourth Strong Cities Global Summit in New York.

Contact

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