

## OPINION / OMAN

# Oman's role in combating extremism and terrorism

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PUBLISHED: 9:16 PM, FEB 11, 2026



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Every year on February 12, the world marks the International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism as and when Conducive to Terrorism. This observance, established by the United Nations, serves as a reminder of the shared global responsibility to confront the roots of extremism and prevent its escalation into terrorism.

Governments worldwide bear the primary duty to safeguard their societies through preventive strategies and remedial actions. Terrorism is not merely a security threat; it is a profound social affliction. Its impacts linger far beyond isolated incidents, scarring



individuals, disrupting development, and undermining national prosperity. Because terrorism stems from identifiable causes — often rooted in intellectual, social, and religious forms of extremism — addressing these precursors is essential.

The international community has responded by promoting a culture of peace, coexistence, and respect for diversity. This approach emphasises shared human values, the sanctity of life, and security, while rejecting distortions of good and evil or justifications for violence based on differences in thought, religion, or ethnicity. Such differences must never be exploited to legitimise hatred, exclusion or killing.

Oman has actively contributed to this global effort rather than remaining a passive observer. Domestically, the Sultanate of Oman has implemented robust legal frameworks, intellectual guidance, and public education campaigns to warn against the lure of terror groups. Internationally, Oman has promoted dialogue through campaigns, exhibitions, land and sea journeys focused on coexistence, and publications dedicated to tolerance.

Key initiatives from the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs include the Message of Islam (launched in 2010), which fosters constructive interfaith and inter-sect dialogue worldwide, drawing on Oman's longstanding tradition of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence; and The Human Fraternity (2019), launched under the slogan "Towards Shared Human Values." The National Committee for Combating Terrorism plays a central role, overseeing the implementation of targeted financial sanctions, issuing guidance on terrorism's foundations and financing, and raising public awareness of its causes and consequences. Oman's comprehensive approach has earned international recognition, including positive assessments of its laws and procedures in counter-terrorism efforts.

Yet the challenge has grown more complex. For decades, terrorist organisations targeted youth through indoctrination and emotional manipulation. Today, social media and artificial intelligence amplify their reach via disinformation, ideological incitement, cyberattacks

and online recruitment through networks, games and apps. Extremists exploit multiplayer gaming platforms — using in-game chat rooms for recruitment, turning extremist ideas into “challenges” or missions via gamification, and embedding secret messages through symbols or encrypted maps. These tactics disproportionately target the 13–25 age group, who are more impressionable, seeking belonging and prone to rebellion.

Effective countermeasures require modern, multifaceted responses: enacting laws that require gaming companies to monitor content and ban modifications containing extremist symbols or messages; enforcing strict platform policies against recruitment in chat rooms; forging security partnerships between governments and gaming firms to detect suspicious behaviour; deploying artificial intelligence to identify keywords and patterns linked to extremism; launching national awareness campaigns for parents, teachers, and youth on digital risks and recruitment tactics; establishing hotlines for reporting suspicious activity in games and online spaces; integrating digital literacy and online safety into school curricula; and enhancing international cooperation in intelligence-sharing and research on cyber-terrorism.

Equally important is building preventive societal awareness rooted in tolerance, acceptance of difference, peace, coexistence, solidarity and cooperation — transcending religion, ethnicity, or ideology — while offering psychological, intellectual and behavioural guidance and rehabilitation where needed.

On this International Day, we reflect on these challenges and reaffirm our duty to protect Omani society, long admired for its security, stability, and deep-rooted traditions of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and acceptance of diversity. These values are foundational pillars that must be actively defended — not taken for granted. In alignment with Oman’s National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, which stresses cooperation at national and international levels to eradicate this scourge, responsibility extends beyond official bodies. It calls on every

citizen to participate conscientiously in safeguarding our homeland and security from terrorist threats, regardless of their origin.

United in humanity and committed to its well-being, we can prevail.

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