



High Council for Human Rights of  
the Islamic Republic of Iran

No. 1



# **An Elucidating Report on: The Nature of the Events of 2026 and; the Terrorist Nature of the Violent Acts**

**The High Council for Human Rights  
of The Islamic Republic of Iran**

**(January 2026)**

# *In the Name of GOD*

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## Introduction

This report has been prepared with the objective of legal clarification and of setting out the factual and legal realities surrounding the events of the year **2026**. In certain media narratives and some human rights reports, these events have been broadly and uniformly characterized as “public protests,” without adequate and proportionate consideration of the **killings, targeted assassinations, armed attacks, extensive destruction of public and private property, and the deliberate targeting of military and security facilities** that occurred during the course of these events.

The enlightening objective of this report is to **correct this flawed analytical framework** and to return the discussion to the standards accepted under international human rights law and international criminal law. From a human rights perspective, while the right to peaceful protest is recognized as a fundamental right, this right in no way encompasses acts such as **killing and mass violence, the assassination of officials and civilians, the use of firearms and bladed weapons, armed attacks against military and security facilities, the systematic destruction of public and private property, or the creation of widespread fear and terror among the population**. Such acts fall unequivocally outside the scope of protest and are properly analyzed within the framework of **terrorist acts and organized violent conduct**.

In light of the **well-established history of violent riots in Iran in previous years**, and the recurring patterns that have consistently involved acts of terrorism, destruction of infrastructure, targeted attacks against state institutions, and the use of weapons to destabilize public security, the events of the year 2022 likewise exhibited, to a significant extent, the same objective and subjective indicators of terrorism. The persistence of these patterns demonstrates that the situation cannot be characterized as a set of purely protest-related actions; rather, it reflects deliberate and organized violence that has directly targeted the lives of citizens and public security.



The function of this report within the framework of legal clarification is as follows:

- To elucidate the **terrorist nature of violent acts**, including killings, assassinations, armed attacks, and widespread destruction;
- **To refute the narrative of “a unified public protest,”** which, by disregarding the above-mentioned terrorist acts, leads to the normalization and whitewashing of violence and terrorism;
- **To safeguard the concept of human rights** against its instrumentalization for the justification of killing, destruction, and intimidation;
- **To affirm the right and duty of the State to confront domestic terrorism** as part of its positive obligations to protect the right to life, security, and the dignity of citizens.

This report emphasizes that clarifying the killings, assassinations, property destruction, and armed attacks that occurred during these events does not negate the legitimate rights of citizens; rather, it constitutes **a prerequisite for the effective protection of human rights and human security.**

## **Definition of Terrorism in Domestic and International Law**

### **1. International Framework of Terrorism**

In international law, despite the absence of a single, comprehensive definition, terrorism is generally understood as organized or individual acts of violence carried out with political, religious, or ideological motives, targeting civilians or civilian objects, with the aim of instilling widespread fear, threatening societal security, or coercing a government or an international organization to perform or refrain from a particular act. This concept has been criminalized under various thematic conventions (such as those addressing aircraft hijacking, bombings, financing of terrorism, etc...).

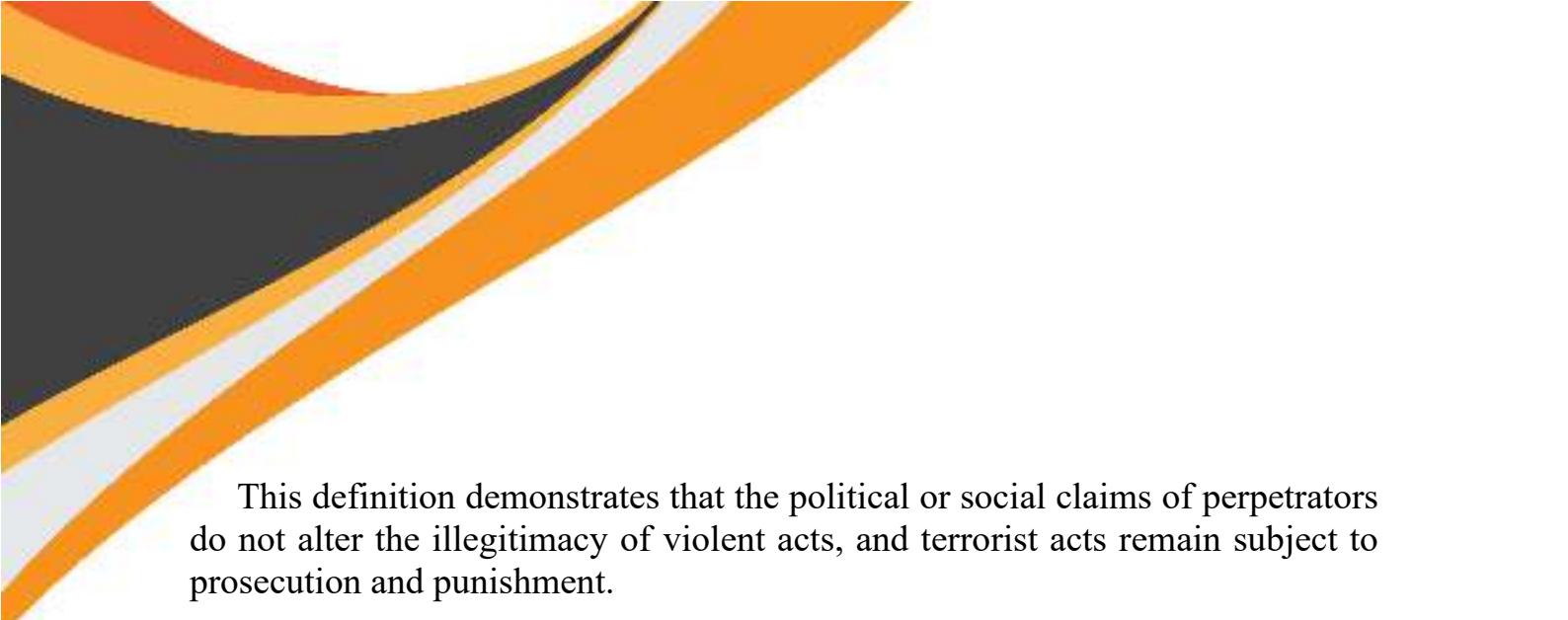
The main characteristics of a terrorist act are:

- Organized and deliberate violence
- Threats to life and public security
- Instilling fear and terror within society
- Influencing the will of the government or the public

## 2. Domestic Legal Framework

Under Iran's domestic law, acts characterized by widespread violence, threats to citizens' lives, and the destruction of public places are classified as terrorist offenses. In the Islamic Penal Code (Book Five – Ta'zir), certain acts that possess a terrorist nature, such as *moharebeh* (waging war against God), *essad fi'l-arz* (corruption on earth), and armed actions against the country's internal or external security, are criminalized. These titles are practically used to address terrorist conduct, even though the term "terrorism" is not explicitly mentioned. In this regard, the Anti-Terrorism Financing Act (enacted in 2015) is the most important law that explicitly includes **the term "terrorism" in its title**. The law explicitly states that the commission or threat of any violent act, such as murder, assassination, violent acts causing serious bodily harm, kidnapping, unlawful seizure and hostage-taking, or deliberate violent acts against persons enjoying legal immunity, or endangering their life or freedom with the intent to influence the policies, decisions, or actions of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, other countries, or international organizations represented within Iran, as well as any sabotage of public or private property and installations, etc... , is considered a terrorist act.

Therefore, under Iran's domestic laws, the targeting of government officials and security forces, armed attacks against public, state, and critical infrastructure facilities, threats to and harm against civilians and ordinary citizens, as well as the creation of widespread fear and terror, constitute acts of terrorism.



This definition demonstrates that the political or social claims of perpetrators do not alter the illegitimacy of violent acts, and terrorist acts remain subject to prosecution and punishment.

## **Distinguishing Peaceful Protest from Terrorism and Organized Violence**

### **1. Legal Definition of Peaceful Protest**

Under international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the right to peaceful assembly is recognized as a fundamental right. This right is subject to limitations that are imposed in accordance with the law in a democratic society and are necessary for the protection of national security or public safety, public order, public health or morals, or the rights and freedoms of others.

### **2. Indicators of Peaceful Protest**

A peaceful protest is characterized by the following features:

- The expression of demands **without resorting to violence**
- No use of firearms or bladed weapons
- No destruction of public or private property
- Respect for the rights of other citizens and law enforcement forces

A peaceful protest, even if conducted on a large scale, remains legitimate as long as these criteria are observed.

### **3. Pattern of Violence in the Events of 2026: Exceeding the framework of Peaceful Protest**

A significant portion of the events of 2026 exhibited **clear indicators of exceeding the framework of peaceful protest** and displayed **elements of**

**organized violence and terrorism.** Based on international criminal law instruments and internationally recognized human rights standards, these indicators include:

- Use of **firearms, bladed weapons, and incendiary materials** in attacks
- **Organized nature** of violent actions
- Attacks against **security and military forces, government and emergency facilities**
- Instilling widespread **fear and terror** among the public
- **Extensive destruction** of public and private property
- **Assassinations**, including targeting officials and unarmed civilians

#### **4. Prominent Examples of Violence and Terrorist Acts**

- **Assassination and killing of government officials**

Notable examples include:

- ✓ The assassination of the Esfarayen Prosecutor
- ✓ The martyrdom and killing of several law enforcement and security personnel
- ✓ Direct attacks with firearms and bladed weapons against officers while performing their duties

These actions constitute clear instances of **terrorist crimes and crimes against public security.**

- **Use of weapons and armed attacks**

Reports indicate:

- ✓ Widespread use of firearms and bladed weapons
- ✓ Throwing of incendiary materials and Molotov cocktails
- ✓ Attacks on military, law enforcement, and security facilities

These actions completely negate the legitimacy of any claims of protests.

- **Targeting civilians and the victimization of non-combatants**

- ✓ Killing of a three-year-old child
- ✓ Shooting at or attacking passersby
- ✓ Martyrdom and injury of unarmed civilians

In total, of the **3,117 people who lost their lives** in these incidents, **2,427 were innocent civilians and law enforcement/security personnel**. These figures reflect the inhumane nature and organized violence of the actions.

- **Destruction of public, religious, and critical infrastructure**

The extent of the damage based on final statistics is as follows:

- ✓ 305 ambulances, 24 gas stations, and 750 banks were damaged or set on fire;
- ✓ Over 400 government facilities were destroyed;
- ✓ 749 police vehicles were damaged in attacks;
- ✓ Cultural and religious centers, including 200 schools, 89 seminaries, 350 mosques, and even the Armenian Church were targeted.

In addition, markets, shops, emergency vehicles, public transport, and other private and public property were also destroyed. The violent actions also included atrocities reminiscent of the ISIS, such as: burning individuals alive, beheadings, and stabbings. These acts further demonstrate the extreme level of organized violence.

- **Links of certain elements to terrorist groups and organized networks**

Intelligence, judicial, and field evidence indicate that some individuals involved in the violent actions:

- ✓ Had direct or indirect connections with recognized terrorist groups;
- ✓ Received foreign support in the form of media, financial, or training assistance;

- ✓ Operated within organized networks rather than as individual or spontaneous actors.

These connections elevate the nature of the events beyond mere social discontent, framing them as part of a broader project aimed at destabilizing internal security.

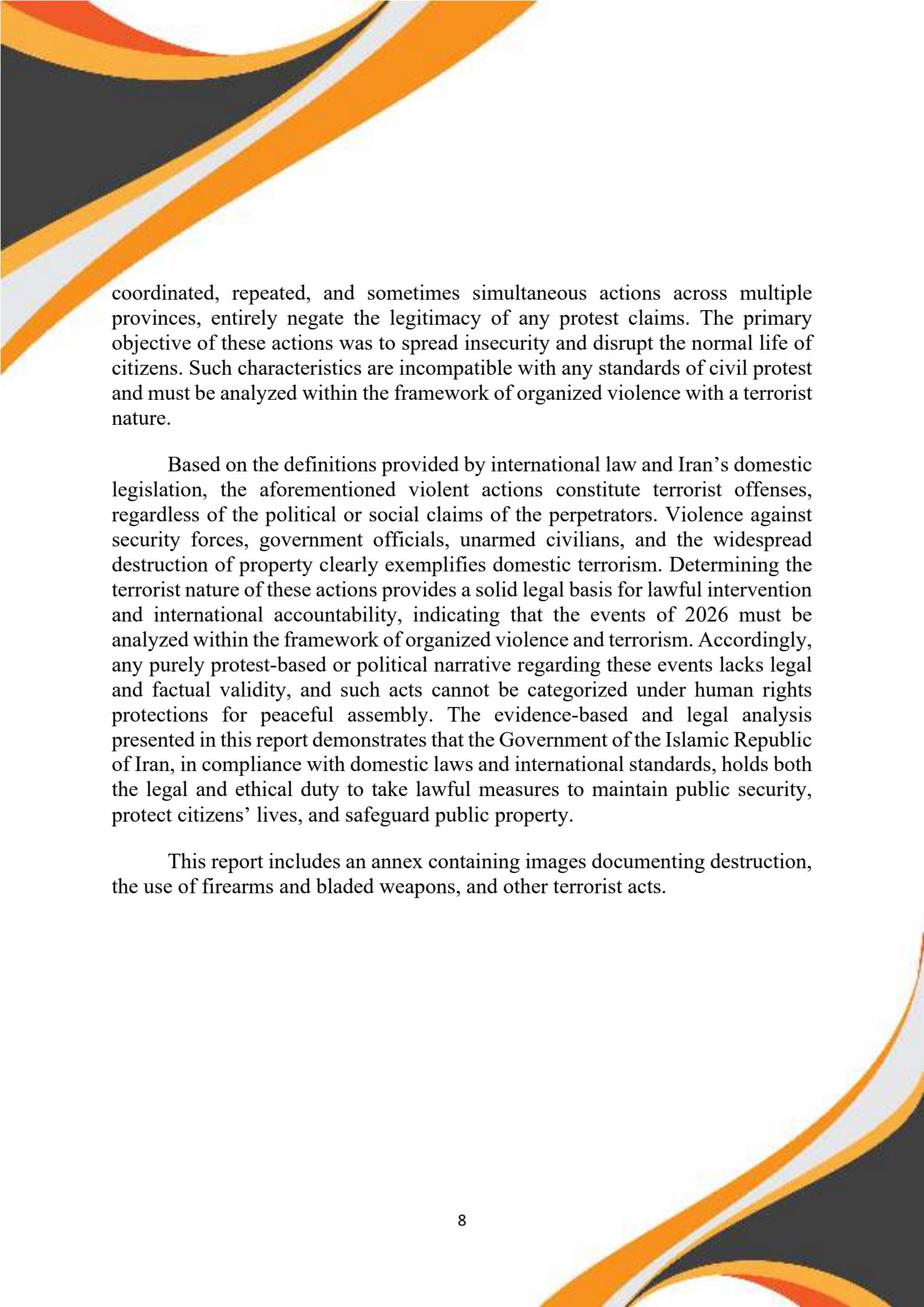
### Comparative Analysis: Peaceful Protest or Terrorism?

Human Rights Standard	Peaceful Protest	Occurred Events
Non-reliance on violence	Fundamental condition	Widespread violations
Prohibition on use of weapons	Not permissible	Repeated use of weapons
Immunity of civilians	Core principle	Harm to civilians
Prohibition on destruction	Legitimacy condition	Extensive destruction of public and private property
Targeting civilians	Exercise of rights	Instilling fear and terror among the public

This table demonstrates that a significant portion of the events **clearly fall outside the definition of peaceful protest** and should be assessed within the framework of **terrorist violence and armed riot**.

### Conclusion

Based on official documentation, statistics, and human rights analyses, the narrative of a “unified public protest” does not align with the on-the-ground realities of the events of 2026. Field investigations and official reports indicate that a significant portion of these events exhibited clear elements of terrorism, assassination, mass killings, widespread destruction, and the instillation of public fear. The use of firearms and bladed weapons against security forces and civilians, the targeting of non-combatants, attacks on public facilities, banks, ambulances, municipal service stations, and critical infrastructure, as well as



coordinated, repeated, and sometimes simultaneous actions across multiple provinces, entirely negate the legitimacy of any protest claims. The primary objective of these actions was to spread insecurity and disrupt the normal life of citizens. Such characteristics are incompatible with any standards of civil protest and must be analyzed within the framework of organized violence with a terrorist nature.

Based on the definitions provided by international law and Iran's domestic legislation, the aforementioned violent actions constitute terrorist offenses, regardless of the political or social claims of the perpetrators. Violence against security forces, government officials, unarmed civilians, and the widespread destruction of property clearly exemplifies domestic terrorism. Determining the terrorist nature of these actions provides a solid legal basis for lawful intervention and international accountability, indicating that the events of 2026 must be analyzed within the framework of organized violence and terrorism. Accordingly, any purely protest-based or political narrative regarding these events lacks legal and factual validity, and such acts cannot be categorized under human rights protections for peaceful assembly. The evidence-based and legal analysis presented in this report demonstrates that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in compliance with domestic laws and international standards, holds both the legal and ethical duty to take lawful measures to maintain public security, protect citizens' lives, and safeguard public property.

This report includes an annex containing images documenting destruction, the use of firearms and bladed weapons, and other terrorist acts.



