



Handbook: Voices of victims of terrorism



Colofon

This handbook is a compilation of experiences shared during the RAN VVT meetings held from 2012 to 2015. All victims, victim organisations, practitioners and experts present at these meetings contributed to this handbook.

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RAN VVT Recommendations

This handbook is a compilation of experiences shared during the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) meetings of the Voices of Victims working group (RAN VVT), held from 2012 to 2015. The RAN VVT working group considered how testimonies from victims of terrorism can work as a powerful narrative in countering violent extremism (CVE).

The handbook aims to disseminate the shared experiences with those involved in supporting victims. Besides victim organisations, it also aims to reach out to a broader audience: educators, youth workers and other professionals working on CVE (e.g. prison/probation staff or community police).

Furthermore, this handbook offers recommendations to support decision-making processes. A distinction has been made between the recommendations for victim organisations, those for European Union (EU) Member States and those for the European Commission. The handbook does not aim to be comprehensive, but rather to provide a framework for those dealing with testimonies of victims of terrorism.

Victim organisations

- Take care of individual victims. The main goal is to help victims regain their independence and place in society, and to counsel them to cope with the tragedy that befell them. Appropriate support should be given to victims who wish to play an active role in CVE, and it should be provided before, during and after their testimony. Professional support is also necessary for victims, for example via psychologists, storytellers or pedagogical experts.
- Victims of terrorism are the ambassadors of collective memory. Collecting, recording and distributing their testimonies will keep the terroristic attack and its victims visible — for this and future generations, in order to not forget.
- Victim organisations need to be (more) aware of the possible role they can play in CVE. Organisations should incorporate people who are willing to defend democratic values. If possible, the pool and capacity of victims should be expanded: a broad range of victim profiles will increase the choice of credible messengers for various situations and across several target groups (schools, prisons, youth work, etc.).
- Cooperate and share best practices between victim organisations within and beyond the EU, so as to strengthen and improve the use of testimonies.
- Testimonies, in order to be effective, should be used in a broader programme and can be linked with related issues such as civic education, history and critical thinking. Start the testimony preferably from a general democratic perspective, and express democratic values. It is important to include the notion of dehumanisation in the testimony, and to state explicitly that not all perpetrators are inspired by the same ideology. For instance, the religiously inspired extremist attacks might lead people to believe that all perpetrators of terrorism are Muslim.
- Victim organisations should make one person in their organisation responsible for internet and social media action. This person should have the necessary skill set and means to

communicate the narratives and messages of victims online. This person will need to be trained to carry out these tasks effectively.

- Be continuously aware that there should be no victim 'hierarchy' or hierarchy of suffering. Every victim deserves acknowledgment, recognition and support.
- The security of victims must be guaranteed at all times.
- Structural and professional evaluation of the methodology of CVE programmes is key to improving the use of testimonies in CVE.

Member States

- For victims of terrorism, having their rights recognised and acknowledged is vital, both for their personal well-being and for their potential role as compelling players in radicalisation awareness and CVE. Recognition and acknowledgement of terrorism victims by law and practice is key.
- Member States should incorporate victims of terrorism in CVE policy development, implementation and evaluation.
- Recognise and facilitate victim organisations. Member States can promote social cohesion among citizens and victims by facilitating the development of associations of victims of terrorism. While the organisations' independence is of the utmost importance, victim organisations could be supported by governments. For instance with training on the use of the Internet and social media, by facilitating their entry to the educational system. Furthermore, by promoting cooperation and engagement between various local, national, and international organisations dealing with the topic of CVE, and even by providing the necessary infrastructure and (human) resources. Treat all victims of terrorism and their organisations equally; do not discriminate.
- Support the message put out by victim organisations. Ensure that victim organisations have access to public communication services (such as national broadcasting carriers) and to support for their communication projects and activities. More specifically on this point, assistance on communication is sorely needed. As small non-governmental organisations (NGOs), mostly without specific professional support, organisations of victims of terrorism often have difficulty attracting media attention, especially when competing with the voices of organisations with huge financial and human resources wishing to influence public opinion.

European Commission

- The EU should recognise and support the participation of victims and victim organisations in CVE (policy). There is a need for a global common awareness at the EU level to link the Member States policy in supporting the victims of terrorism.
- EU CVE Calls for tender should promote the involvement of victim organisations and victims. They should be more flexible, and open to smaller organisations who wish to apply.
- Acknowledge and support commemorative events for strengthening collective memory, social cohesion and democratic values. This should be one of the principles of European CVE.



For example, European Remembrance day could be organised differently: more publicly, more open to the media, involving civil society (educators, youngsters, etc.), more national government officials and Members of the European Parliament. Also, Member States could be advised to organise, formalise and officialise a national remembrance day, in cooperation with victim organisations.



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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Victims and victim organisations as contributors to CVE

Victims of terrorism: definition

There is no clear-cut definition of a 'victim of a terrorist act' in international law.

However, a definition of 'victim' exists in Article 1 of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (hereafter the 1985 UN Declaration):

1. 'Victims' means persons who, individually or collectively, have suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws operative within Member States, including those laws proscribing criminal abuse of power.
2. A person may be considered a victim, under this Declaration, regardless of whether the perpetrator is identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted and regardless of the familial relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. The term 'victim' also includes, where appropriate, the immediate family or dependants of the direct victim and persons who have suffered harm in intervening to assist victims in distress or to prevent victimization.
3. The provisions contained herein shall be applicable to all, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, age, language, religion, nationality, political or other opinion, cultural beliefs or practices, property, birth or family status, ethnic or social origin, and disability.

Additionally, according to the Council of Europe Recommendation 2006(8) of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on assistance to crime victims, 'the term "victim" also includes, where appropriate, the immediate family or dependants of the direct victim'.

Victims of terrorism have an experience in common: they share the personal feelings and suffering that follow a terroristic attack. There are, however, different circumstances. For instance, some victims are under the threat of becoming a victim again. Some have been able to move on with their lives, despite their experience, while others have not. Moreover, the political situation in the country or region, public opinion on the specific terrorist act/situation, the actual terroristic attack, and the cultural as well as the historical situation might differ. The question at hand is, How to use the victims' voices in the fight against violent extremism?

Many victims of terrorism want to participate in positive action, to prevent what happened from happening again. Some may organise a remembrance day in honour of the victims of a terroristic attack, while others choose to engage with victims of other attacks or with communities. Within the objectives of RAN, victims of terrorism are considered credible voices on the painful and human consequences of violent extremism and terrorism. Victims are the representatives of and ambassadors for public memory. This voice can offer a strong narrative for the purpose of creating awareness of radicalisation and preventing violent extremism. Testimonies of victims can provoke exchanges and give the target audience the opportunity to reflect on the story and relate to it.

The mission of the RAN VVT is to make the victims heard, their positive values understood and their role empowered to use an effective tool to make people aware of the dangers of terrorism and violent extremism. Victims have become representatives of what a terrorist act implies for the lives

of ordinary citizens. This message should be spread in the most effective way to prevent people becoming attracted, permissive or indifferent towards radical movements or propaganda.

Communicating the testimonies of the victims to the general public or specific focus groups on the one hand, and protecting the interests and well-being of the victims (organisations) on the other, is a delicate challenge. Ethical, legal, political and academic factors come into play. By seeking good practices and approaches, involving academic specialists and remaining innovative, the RAN VVT tries to set a new standard for making the voices of victims heard. The RAN VVT will promote these standards and help create and disseminate testimonies.

Addressing testimonies to an audience is a complex process, and the effect depends on many variables. Testimonies come in various forms: direct face-to-face testimonies; and indirect testimonies told through photography, film, internet and social media. It is not just the story itself that is decisive — there are other important elements: how the story is told, by whom, where, through which channel, with what goal and to which audience. The question of effectiveness can be approached from various perspectives and by different actors (the target group, the narrators, the mediator, etc.).

1.2 Aim of this handbook

This handbook compiles the experiences shared during the RAN VVT meetings held from 2012 to 2015. The RAN VVT working group considered how testimonies from victims of terrorism can work as a powerful narrative in CVE.

The aim is to disseminate shared experiences, and to support not only other victims and victim organisations, but also a broader audience: educators, youth workers, and other professionals working on preventing or CVE (e.g. prison/probation staff or community police).

The handbook offers practical hints on how to improve the effectiveness of direct and indirect testimonies and the required prerequisites, but also on how to deal with the media as a victim (or organisation), and how to cooperate with formers. The use of victim testimonies is a sensitive issue, with many variables. Therefore, this handbook should not be considered comprehensive, and the use of testimonies should always be tailored to the circumstances.

1.3 Structure

The handbook starts by describing the context and situation of victims of terrorism and their organisations, in order to better understand what needs to be taken into account before victims can contribute to CVE (Chapter 2). This is followed by a description of the different testimonies used to raise awareness and prevent violent extremism, as well as their effectiveness. A distinction is made between direct and indirect testimonies, and the use of the internet and social media are highlighted

(Chapter 3). Victims and victim organisations are often addressed by the media, especially after a terroristic attack. Therefore, chapter 4 is dedicated to handling the media, responding to media requests, and conversely, gaining media attention. Potential cooperation with victims and formers, and the prerequisites for cooperation in CVE are highlighted in chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Situation of victims of terrorism and victim organisations

2.1 Context

The RAN VVT's overarching goal is to help fight radicalisation leading to violent extremism. However, it is crucial to establish fundamental standards for the rights, support and protection of victims of terrorism, as recognition of these rights is a prerequisite if they are to play a key part in raising awareness of violent extremism. Acknowledgement of the rights of the victims of violent terrorism is essential, although that is not the primary focus of this handbook.

If and whether a victim or victim organisation ⁽¹⁾ can play a part in a violent extremism prevention programme depends on their personal and emotional situation, the effectiveness of the victim organisation, and the preparation of the narrator and the recipients. The country's political, cultural and historical situation is equally important. Victim organisations can become the central point of contact with those affected by terrorism for civil society and government bodies (local, regional or national). At the same time, such an organisation can in turn become their spokesperson to the general public.

In order to support or cooperate with victims of terrorism and their organisations, it is crucial to understand the specific circumstances and dynamics they contend with, whether immediately after the event or many years following it. The better we understand their predicament, the more we can do to promote their recovery process and do justice to their case — and the more victim organisations can raise awareness of violent extremism. Hence, it is essential to support such groups in their work, help people cope with the tragic circumstances and regain their independence in society. This implies ensuring single victims and their relatives have all the emotional, psychological and practical support they may need to recover.

Legal protection, equality between victims and independence from governments are essential preconditions. Being independent does not imply an unwillingness to cooperate. Where goals are shared, as with fighting violent extremism, this is even considered a necessity.

Furthermore, governments need to support victims and the creation of victim organisations. Facilitating can take different forms: for example, it may mean financial support or assistance with

⁽¹⁾ The term 'victim organisations' is used in this document to mean victim organisations, associations, self-help groups, support groups and interest groups.

specific required expertise. Governments (at local, regional, national and European level) can also offer a platform, ensure organisations can access public communication services and support their communication projects and activities. State-funded or state-owned institutions like schools should be strongly encouraged to be open for the delivery of CVE testimonies. Such support does not imply agreement on all subjects (indeed, sometimes governments and victim organisations may hold opposing views). Mutual respect, however, should be maintained throughout.

Finally, it is crucial that governments recognise all victims of terrorism, regardless of the political, ideological, religious nature of the terrorism that has affected them. Discriminating between groups of victims affected by different incidents of terrorism may cause disruption, and diminish or impede social cohesion and the victim organisations' capacity for action in CVE.

The 'Survivors for peace' project from the Tim Parry and Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace (United Kingdom) provides victims of political violence and terrorism with both a virtual and real peer-support network where dedicated officers maintain communication platforms, as well as a programme of activities in which survivors can enrol, following intensive one-to-one interviews.

Survivors (including family members and formers) are taken through interactive non-formal learning and support delivery at the purpose-built Peace Centre and elsewhere, intended to help them cope with and recover from their experiences. Through sessions on living with trauma and sharing experiences, survivors are trained and supported to engage in their own separate advocacy and leadership activities, often commemorating and raising awareness of the impact of violent extremism, with a view to reducing its future incidence.

Expertly trained and supported, survivors also co-facilitate the specialist team's provision of Critical Incident Training, to aid first responder preparations for terrorist attacks.

Further, activities include dialogue, where survivors are encouraged to meet with formers or representatives of the 'other side' with a view to mutual humanisation and breaking the cycle of violence.

See online: <http://www.foundation4peace.org/>

2.2. Important to know ⁽²⁾

Not every victim wants to testify, nor are they all able to; we should not be critical or judgemental in such cases. Narrating a testimony as a victim is an emotionally demanding task. Therefore, victim organisations working in the field of CVE, should only work with victims who are willing and able to be involved in the work of preventing violent extremism as speakers, writers, organisers, etc.

Victims must manage their own personal (psychological and physical) consequences of the past, something which should be taken into account. Every victim's different background and situation is different. Victims who share their stories have various reasons and motives for doing so. Narrating a

² Guidebook, Together we are smarter and stronger! (2008) Ms I. Cancrinus and Ms J. C. M. Netten MSc, MA. Impact.

testimony as a victim is emotionally demanding: this tends to be forgotten. Even if support is provided, people may still temporarily or permanently stop offering their narratives: they may not be able to cope with the task, or may be dissatisfied with the way they are treated, for instance. Victim organisations should ensure that victims are not victimised again as a result of their testimony. Those making and publicising their testimonies should be offered assistance in dealing with the trauma involved in this process.

Mourning

Victims have had to cope with horrific situations. Their lives have been turned upside down, and will never be the same. They may have suffered a great deal of loss: of their loved ones, their physical integrity, their jobs, their future, and even their faith in life and the world. In short, they have many losses to mourn for and emotions to manage; legal and social recognition, and emotional and practical support and information are sorely needed. As mentioned before, organisations of victims of terrorism can assist in this process by providing information (varying from legal issues to addresses of specialised therapists), counselling, guidance, recognition, support and so on.

Mourning is an acutely individual, personal and unique process; each person mourns and expresses grief in his or her own way. Mourning affects not only family members, but also friends, neighbours, colleagues, a community or even an nation. Organisations should be particularly aware of the different needs, rates of recovery and ways of expressing pain and grief amongst the bereaved (very young, children, (young) adults, parents, brothers, sisters and survivors).

Resilience

Human history contains many shocking and violent periods: wars, disasters and accidents have all significantly affected the individual and social fabric of many areas. Yet through the suffering and consequences of such actions, people have also revealed their resilience. In many cases, people can withstand the most difficult circumstances and recover; once they find the strength to rise above their misfortunes. One's immediate circle of acquaintances — immediate and extended family, friends, neighbours, clubs and religious communities — can be of great help in these cases. A sympathetic listener and the offer of practical assistance can help the person affected by the disaster feels less isolated, which in turn may motivate and encourage victims to increase their resilience.

Victimhood

Committing to a victim organisation and to give testimonies is certainly praiseworthy, and it can have a positive effect on many people, including in the recovery process. However, in a minority of cases, there is a risk of 'victimhood' weakening rather than empowering the individual. This implies that they identify to a detrimental degree (increasingly or fully) with the terroristic act and its consequences leaving no room anymore for other aspects of (their) life. They remain focused on all the problematic and painful aspects of the incident, even after a long period of time, and it may be increasingly difficult or even impossible for them to look to the future and focus on recovery, which in turn renders them dependent and passive. It is crucial for organisations of victims of terrorism to

be aware of this, and to identify such cases, and encourage these people to find professional help (if not provided by the victim organisation) and try to strike a new balance. In such instances, it may be counterproductive to use their messages to oppose violent extremism, as this may disempower rather than empower them to recover.

Hierarchy of suffering

A common human characteristic is to compare one's position or situation with that of another: are we better, richer, more important and powerful, etc., or are we worse off? This tendency may give rise to a frequently observed phenomenon with victims: the hierarchy of suffering; who suffers most. Victims and bereaved may – implicitly or explicitly - compare their situations, assessing who may be considered more of a victim, and therefore more deserving of attention, recognition and support. The party considered less of a victim may be considered less entitled to such help. It is difficult to contend with such situations, but acknowledgement of this type of behaviour may help to identify and curb such processes. The hierarchy of suffering may also prevent victims from reaching out and accepting help, and caregivers from providing help to all who need it.

Storytelling in CVE

Usually the stories of the victims are studied and analysed using 'therapeutic storytelling' — a method of overcoming the trauma of victims and communities. The main target group for this storytelling is the victim itself: enabling him/her to speak about what happened to overcome mental blockades. 'Mental health specialists, mental health nurses, emergency psychiatrists, and writers have long espoused the benefits of literature, expressive writing, therapeutic storytelling, and poetry therapy on the mental health of the patients in clinical setting'⁽³⁾.

Our interest lies in the shift from the clinical, health and protected dimensions to the public, political and pedagogical ones: when storytelling becomes a way to empower citizens by giving them a voice. In this case, the role of storytelling extends beyond catharsis; it is also a means of transforming a suppressed story into a new shared national history, as was the case for apartheid survivors in South Africa, or Nazi concentration camp survivors in Europe.

2.3 Preparing victims to give their testimony

Preconditions

Many victim organisations support victims in preparing to testify. Preparation is crucial for reasons of personal safety, an effective message and a good setting in which the testimonial takes place.

A precondition for successful preparation is the existence of trust between the victim and the victim organisation. A positive, open atmosphere is also needed. The first step is to establish a respectful

⁽³⁾Enhancing Counter-Terrorism Strategies Through Visual Storytelling Techniques and Community-Empowered Ethnographies, by Sudha ARLIKATTI and Melinda LEVIN, in Counter Terrorism in Diverse Communities, S. Ekici (Ed.) IOS Press, 2011.

relationship. It takes time for people to open up. Creating a warm atmosphere and enough time for talking, sharing experiences and listening to one other are essential.

It will take some time before people are ready to reproduce their stories. The victims will relive the experience and express their grievances again. The first few conversations will be revolve around what happened, and will include details of the events. This will be followed by discussions on the perpetrator, and on the victim's family and his/her feelings. The process, however, does not end after a number of conversations. By using teambuilding days, exchanging stories with other victims, seeing a counsellor, and engaging in personal contact and friendship, one can establish a network of support and forge a lifelong cooperation. This is necessary, because only by knowing someone really well, can you safeguard them and sense when they have reached their limits. Furthermore, building a network of victims of terrorism can benefit victims, as they are supported by sharing experiences and stories with other victims.

In addition to this process, victims should be trained⁴ to handle issues such as:

- how to tell their own story;
- how to deal with their own emotions when telling the story;
- how to use objects, pictures and audio visual material;
- how to tailor the story to a specific target group, e.g. youngsters;
- how to deal with difficult questions;
- how to deal with disturbing audiences;
- how to tell the story as part of a universal, broader message.

At schools

When victims are going into schools to give their testimony, they or their organisation must visit the school first and meet the teacher. Prior to the testimony, the youngsters should be given relevant information and be engaged in a discussion on the subject (to gain some insight). Youngsters need to be informed and triggered and motivated beforehand, as some of them may be shy, afraid or not interested in the topic. In advance, pupils and students can put together a list of possible questions, which may be ordered by facts, personal experiences, opinions, etc. It can be extremely helpful for the narrator to see the questions of the pupils before the event, so as to gain an idea of the project and the audience.

Finally, it is essential that the school understands that they (together with the victim organisation) are responsible for the victim following the meeting with the youngsters. Recounting a distressing event evokes strong emotions and the teachers and school staff should set aside some time to thank the victim and for debriefing.

⁴ Many of the building blocks of a training can be found in this handbook, however a training has not been developed yet within RAN.

School staff need guidance in addressing possible questions and handling challenging behaviour (be it deeply emotional or opposing). Preparation also involves contextualising the narratives, e.g. integrating the programme in the curriculum of civic education, philosophy or history. Subjects should be linked with the interest of youngsters, to retain their attention and inspire curiosity, for example, to better understand foreign cultures, globalisation, etc. When the programme is seen as part of the curriculum, there will be more continuity and broader coverage of the programme, and the testimonies will become more mainstream for the students. Finally, the programme should be monitored and their results evaluated (by the victim organisation and schools, or even by experts on a more academic level), to allow for proposed assessments, adjustments and improvements.

Chapter 3 Testimonies of victims of terrorism

3.1 Variables in the communication process

Addressing testimonies to an audience is a complex process, and the effect depends on many variables. Testimonies come in various forms: direct face-to-face testimonies; and indirect testimonies told through photography, film, internet and social media. It is not just the story itself that is decisive — there are other important elements: how the story is told, by whom, where, through which channel, with what goal and to which audience. The question of effectiveness can be approached from various perspectives and by different actors (the target group, the narrators, the mediator, etc.).

There are themes relevant to the way the voice of victims can become effective in prevention work, like education, social and behavioural science, persuasive communication, youth and media, and even marketing. When using testimonies, it is crucial to be aware of the complex communication process and the variables that play a role in this process.

3.2 Effect of testimonies

One of the working elements of testimonies of victims of terrorism is the fact that people tend to relate to them. The testimony works by humanising the subject, leaving behind the strictly factual elements (number of deceased, description of circumstances, and so on). The personal stories of victims have two effects. They put a face to those who were attacked, and they also highlight how ordinary people can be affected and how they cope with shocking and harrowing situations. The more the victims are seen as 'one of us', the greater the impact their message will have for the audience. Victims telling their stories in their own community will increase this effect.

Victims' narratives are available for actors like schools, community centres, NGOs and local governments. These actors can spotlight the victims' perspective in their narrative on violent extremism. Focusing exclusively on the perpetrators without showing the consequences of their actions may glamourise and romanticise the perpetrators for groups vulnerable to radical messages. Local actors will be more in tune with the local (political) situation where the radicalisation process

may be occurring. This offers opportunities to look very specifically for the right testimonies, at the right time, in the right situation and to the right target group or audience.

'Witness of history' (Austria), a Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) project, introduces youngsters during their formative years to the reality of violent extremist ideologies, and presents alternatives to revenge. Personal stories are able to reach an audience better than any official speeches and abstract analysis. As victims and survivors, they speak from a position of authenticity and moral authority, and with personal conviction.

The 'Witness of history' films give a human face to the tragic terrorist attacks and create a potent counterbalance to extremist propaganda.

The personal stories of victims whose experience of grief and loss has made them stronger and able to take a positive stance help blur the lines between 'black and white' thinking. They plant a seed of doubt in the minds of those who might consider supporting violence, or who lack alternatives. It is a 'hearts and minds' approach: to develop critical thinking as a deterrent against radicalisation.

See online: <http://www.women-without-borders.org/projects/37>

3.3. Direct testimonies

Direct testimonies are testimonies of victims told to a specific audience, for example, to youngsters at school. The physical presence of a victim telling a personal story affects the audience. There is mutual contact between the sender and receiver of a testimony, so sincerity, empathy and the humane message are directly sensed by the audience. The victim can control how and what is being told. The discussion forms part of the testimony. The victim can respond to questions and take part in the discussion afterwards. The effectiveness of a testimony depends a great deal on how it is told by the victim. The attitude and mood of the victim influences the testimony, and therefore, the public. The risks for victims presenting direct testimonies are the possible impact of reliving the trauma, possible prejudices, and being overwhelmed with emotion.

The Omagh Support and Self Help Group (OSSHG) (United Kingdom) organises storytelling projects in schools to raise awareness of the impacts of radicalisation. They state that young people are extremely susceptible, and need to learn more about active citizenship, social interaction, cultural diversity, etc. as part of civic education in schools.

See online: <http://www.omaghbomb.co.uk>

3.4 Indirect testimonies (photographs/film/paper)

Indirect testimonies of victims of terrorism present the victim's story without him or her being physically present, e.g. through a film or book. The advantages are that a larger audience can be reached with less effort, and visual and audio effects can be added. However, this method has its challenges: unknown efficacy of the testimonies as a piece of counter-communication against violent extremism, loss of control over the message and/or its possible misuse, and lack of feedback.

Indirect sources like books, photos or films can tell a complete story from different perspectives. This can be thought-provoking for the audience. An appeal at an emotional level, to establish empathy among the audience, will support the message of the testimonies. Group dynamics can be used in a positive way during the discussion of the indirect source, if well prepared and guided.

Indirect sources of testimonies could be combined with study visits to a museum, monument for commemoration, or a place where an assault/attack took place. Furthermore, it is helpful if the programme is supported by a portal or website containing relevant and additional documents, photos, videos and so on. A collection of (in)direct sources of testimonies could be selected in every country to use in their national programmes or school curriculum.

The Associazione Italiana Vittime del Terrorismo e dell'Eversione Contro l'Ordinamento Costituzionale dello Stato (AIVITER) (Italy) established a training module for the educational system, to raise awareness of extremist violence and promote active citizenship among youngsters.

Stories and the direct and indirect testimonies of survivors, family members and victims of terrorism are used. Starting from current terrorism challenges, the testimonies and multimedia instruments on victims' stories are used for reflection on related events in Italian history; they increase awareness and information/knowledge of national terrorism and of historical and cultural roots. An awareness of the use of violence in politics and in the risk of engaging in violent extremism encourages youngsters to develop critical thinking.

Furthermore, the storytelling activity by the survivors/victims, in the first person and in public, empowers them, boosting their resilience and their social status and role.

See online: <http://www.vittimeterrorismo.it>

There is a need for more and varied testimonies, as different people engage with different stories or events. A broad range of testimonies means more choice when looking for something appropriate for a specific target group.

3.5 Guidelines for using testimonies

When using the testimonies of victims of terrorism to fight violent extremism, some guidelines apply, as explained below.

- An isolated, stand-alone testimony is less useful. Testimonies should be part of a bigger programme and be integrated within the educational system and civil society for social support and training sessions addressed to frontline practitioners, local/national campaigns, NGO's, prison staff and educators.
- Victims are strongly advised to work in conjunction with a victim organisation. Victim organisations can support, prepare, coordinate and train victims on presenting a testimony for a certain audience. It may be harmful for the victim, and may even damage the cause of CVE, if they work alone. In order to be effective and to protect themselves, the victims have to work with both practitioners and other victims with whom they can share their experience and address their questions, their doubts, their needs. A lone victim can feel isolated and has

more chance to express an aggressive or distressed message that could be counterproductive for CVE.

- Motivation to tell the story should not be appreciation, nor acknowledgement. It should have a broader goal.
- The testimonies are focused, with a specific aim for a specific audience.
- Testimonies should involve reflection (looking back and learning from the past), with the aim of making a difference in the present and the future.
- It is essential to preserve the quality of the testimony and keep it up to date, in order to maintain its potency.
- The political context of a narrative should not be pivotal; rather, the historical and democratic context and process should hold the most prominent position. A victim is not supposed to convince or indoctrinate the audience. Through their narration and their personal journey, the victim aims to reflect the virtues of democratic values and the virtuous circle of dialogue and mutual respect. Victims also allow to raise critical thinking. The main objective of the meeting is not for the audience to agree or reach a compromise, but for them to listen to a narrative of a real experience and reflect on the content (the facts) and emotions. Of course, political opinions may be expressed, but this should not be central to the story.
- When the personal story refers to the basic principles of democracy, the victim could make his or her narrative stronger for youngsters. By using the principles of democracy there is a greater educational impact.
- Be aware that testimonies may have counterproductive results: for instance, people might feel that their ideology or radical opinions are confirmed. Be aware that misused testimonies can have counterproductive results in order to justify unacceptable ideas such as racism, conspiracy theories, justification of terrorism.
- Testimonies should be focused on the story of the victim, not on the background or the aim of the perpetrator.
- Make sure there is enough time in the session to engage in dialogue.
- Work in small groups.
- As a guest speaker, do not lose yourself in your own story and do not talk for too long. Allow ample time and space in your planning for conversation.
- The setting and story should stress the human aspect and be told with empathy.
- An evaluation form can be used for a debrief with the victim, and to improve the narrative.
- If testimonies are included in educational programmes, start at an early stage. In the early stage of adolescence, youngsters are exploring forms of identity, are susceptible, and are receptive to current events and their consequences for society. This phase of personal development, when children are experimenting with identity, is of great interest. It is important in this instance, to adapt the story to the audience, and to help them develop the capacity for critical thinking.
- Educational programmes using victim testimonies can help youngsters to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to participate actively in a democratic society and to strive to

resolve conflict with peaceful solutions. They help cultivate a climate of democracy and challenge violence, racism, intolerance, etc. The didactical and pedagogical (educational) programmes should provoke critical analysis and thinking in youngsters. Further useful remarks on empowering educators and schools in the field of the prevention of radicalisation leading to violent extremism are stated in the *Manifesto for Education — Empowering educators and schools* by RAN PREVENT ⁽⁵⁾.

- When a victim becomes financially dependent of payments for giving their testimony, this makes the circumstances questionable. Victims are witnesses and sincere voices. They have to be supported and their expenses be covered. But if they're paid each time they testify, it will become a business and there might be counter-productive competition between victims.

Critical Mass (the Netherlands) travels to schools with five sea containers, packed with 'experiences'. In an intimate atmosphere, students are encouraged to explore their friends and foes. Who are they, and how did they turn into that?

The purpose of FRIEND&FOE is to give (young) people, students and their teachers the tools to handle conflict in a constructive manner, both in their personal life and in society at large, and to actively prevent the spread of xenophobia and radicalisation, social exclusion, discrimination and bullying.

In additional lessons, mentors or teachers are facilitated to discuss social issues in the classroom and at school, following on from the experiences their students gained in the containers. The lessons are directed at specific courses, such as mentor class, social studies and history, but also career and citizenship, in vocational education. This is an example of how to integrate testimonies into a broader programme, even having additional lessons.

See online: <http://www.criticalmass.nl>

3.6. The internet and social media

Testimonies can be recorded on film and published online, for example on a YouTube channel or Facebook, or spread via social media or email. Using the internet can be beneficial for the distribution of the narratives. The internet allows access to a broader audience, and it is a relatively easy means of distribution. Furthermore, the distribution is less time-consuming and less resource intensive for the victim, who would give the testimony only once, during the recording.

The main challenges of using the internet are that the time and context of the viewing are unknown, as is the audience viewing the content. For a broader context, testimonies can be collected on a website or forum. Websites can provide information, inspire, create awareness and activate people, but also give rise to social networks and provide a library with background information and

⁽⁵⁾ See online: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/docs/manifesto-for-education-empowering-educators-and-schools_en.pdf

workshops for teachers, and expertise for the media. If a broader context is available online, it may attract fewer readers.

When disseminating testimonies through the internet and social media, awareness should be present that negative reactions to the victim or to the group he/she belongs to might occur. Victims' online activity may pose some risks, such as misuse of the content or a negative impact on the victim (their reputation or character), as information on the internet is out in the open.

Although victims as such might be considered credible, internet users may not visit a victim organisation's website with the explicit wish to watch a testimony. So testimonies should also be integrated into other websites, and shown by organisations other than victim organisations alone. The testimonies or links to them could form part of a youth community on the internet, for instance. This is a bottom-up approach with a more credible messenger.

A combination of online and offline activity, carrying the same message, seems to be most effective. Online content often lacks context or leaves a gap between the target group and the person sending out a message. This gap can be bridged by offline dissemination of information. Likewise, the internet and social media might give rise to reflection or even place seeds of doubt for some. Achieving ties between people (bridging and bonding) with the potential to change people's mindset is hard to achieve in relative anonymity. Face-to-face contact with the target group is important for creating awareness, and might change attitudes.

The effects of online activity are difficult to monitor. It is hard to gauge whether an activity is reaching a target group, and if they are taking away the right message. Tracking quantitative results like pages' views, 'likes' and other forms of statistical information that can be gathered easily with software programmes can help to ascertain whether the target group has been reached. However, this will not give an overview of the effects of the message, and of whether the target group extracted the right message. Qualitative research is necessary to determine the effects on the target group.

The internet and social media can be used by victims (and victim organisations) for purposes other than showing testimonies directly to an audience, as shown below.

- To create a database of historical facts.
- To be an online 'activist', i.e. a credible voice which challenges online hate speech and radicalism.
- To assist people who support your case in society by giving them a platform, and provide them with information to help them in their work on the ground. To support parents wishing to discuss certain subjects with their children, or even to start a helpline.

The Map of Terror from the Collective of Victims of Terrorism (COVITE) (Spain) uses the power of online communication by providing texts, videos and images of places where attacks occurred. All the content is used, via the multimedia tool, to contextualise terrorism and for explaining how violent radicalisation can destroy lives. See online: <http://mapadelterror.com/en>

Chapter 4: How to deal with the media

Terrorists attacks are mainly aimed to hit the public opinion, more than the victims themselves. The media and terrorists need one another, they have a symbiotic relationship⁶. Terrorism aims at telling its stories not through its victims' gaze but through the spectators' gaze. Terrorism searches the spectators' gaze, spreading fear and terror, on one side, and concrete propaganda to recruit, on the other side, in a symbiotic relationship with media. Victims and their associations try to overturn and counter-narrate such perspective improving their own gaze, which consists of their stories, testimonies, public speeches and interviews. But how can victim organisations (and victims) use the media to deliver counter-communication aiming to prevent violent extremism and terrorism?

One of the advantages of the media is that it can reach a bigger audience. The downside is that victim organisations lose control over the message. Both sides (victim organisations and the media) should benefit mutually by spreading a message. This would imply newsworthy content that is in line with the message of the victims. This difference in objectives should be taken in account.

Depending on the circumstances, each side could approach the other. Therefore, the main questions are as follows.

1. How can victim organisations (and victims) use the media actively to spread a specific message to prevent violent extremism? When is it effective? When is it of interest to the media?
2. How should victim organisations (and victims) react when approached by the media (reactively)? When is it effective? When is it of interest to the victim organisation?

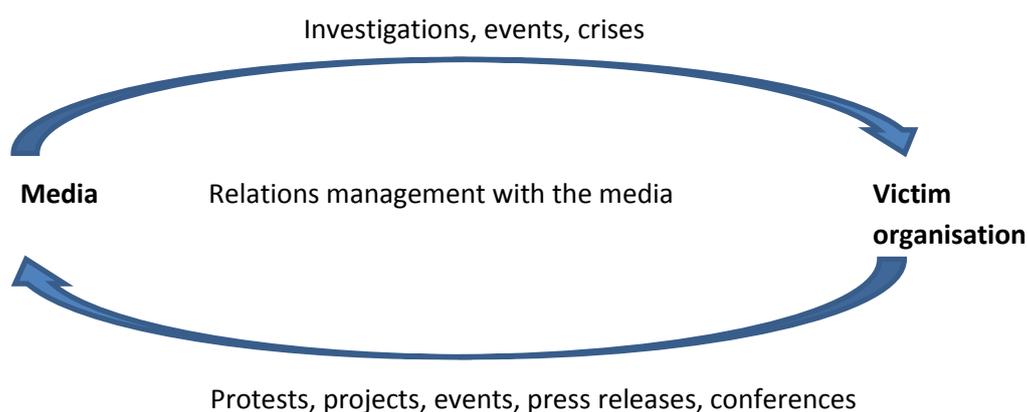


Figure 1 Relation between victim organisations and the media

⁶ Terrorism, Media, and the Ethics of Fiction, Antony Kubiak (2010)

Chapter 4 concentrates on victim organisations dealing with the media, but also applies to victims and other organisations dealing with the prevention of radicalisation and the role of the media. Most of the lessons learned are applicable from both outlooks described above, whether actively approaching the media, or in response to being approached by the media.

There is a distinction between the content of a testimony in the media and the form of the testimony. The form is the style, channel or media being used to convey a testimony. The content refers to the subject matter. The preparation of the interviewee and the journalist are also key. The spokesperson from the victim organisation (who could be a victim) should be advised, trained and supported by the victim organisation or an expert on how to deal with media attention.

For victim organisations, preparation on a wider scale is also necessary, such as development of a communication plan or strategy. Likewise, building and maintaining a good relationship between the organisation and the media is important, as this can help get the message across.

4.1 Content

To attract media attention, a victim organisation should make their story interesting and easy to digest for journalists and editors: write or speak clearly, express ideas in a lively, fitting manner, be relevant and have interesting ideas. The media will appreciate new angles to the story. This can be achieved, for example, by inviting VIPs as spokespersons. When engaging a VIP, one should be sure that they credibly carry the right message.

Another way to engage the media is to spotlight something new: a new testimony, an event, a new concept, approach or anniversary. Use momentum, for example, use a victim remembrance day to create more attention and highlight relevant issues, projects, etc. To add depth to the story, one can place the subject in a broader political context or connect it to a recent event, emphasising how the story/work relates to this event, by using those testimonies of victims that have a substantive link to a recent terroristic event, for instance.

‘David against Goliath’ stories are popular. A small group of persons fighting for justice against a bigger body, be it the state, the justice system or a radical or extremist movement, are well received. Generally, commemorations are not much sought after by the press, as they tend to be annual and are mostly unspectacular. An exception can be made for significant anniversaries like 5 or 10 years. When trying to make the story more interesting for the media, as described earlier, make sure to maintain the link to the personal story. The basic message is the individual authentic story.

Some tips on how to generate media interest follow.

- Be sure of your message (what you want to get across, why and why now);
- Create an effective and understandable narration; master it and believe it;
- Do not try to convey too much information, but rather focus on the main message. Avoid contradictions and confusion within the narration;
- Be coherent and focus on the essentials of the message;

- Avoid coming across as too impersonal and institutional. Remain authentic;
- Do not make assertions that are overconfident or generalised (about the work, or about the represented group), because these will remain with the group or organisation for a long time;
- Do not talk about funding;
- Do not be an instrument or tool for the journalist, politics or ideology;
- Be creative in your communication;
- Try to reach out personally to the media.

4.2 Form

The form is the style, channel or media used for a testimony. When victim organisations and media cooperate, they may have different expectations of how the story should be told. For example: perception of the length of the coverage often differs between journalists and interviewees. Journalists are likely to consider a 2-minute TV news item rather long, while a victim wishing to tell his/her whole story would consider it far too brief. Both parties should be clear about their expectations, in order to streamline the cooperation and to avoid disappointment. Some tips on this matter follow.

- One press release alone might not work, as the press receive a lot of those, every day. Using several channels of communication (also by social media, for instance) gives the impression that something is topical.
- Following up after a press release by calling journalists might be helpful to highlight the message.
- Push the journalist to quote the organisation's name, alongside the story of the victim.
- Publish an opinion column, when relevant, in order to speak as an expert.
- Create media attention by inviting well-known and public personalities, officials, opinion leaders, ambassadors and prestigious speakers.
- Archive all media attention in an open source database, which can be used by the victim organisation, but also by other media.

'Project Papillon' from Association française des Victimes du Terrorisme (AfVT) (France) brings together a group of young victims of terrorism aged between 15 and 23. The group participated in daily group discussions led by psychologists and featuring sports and recreation activities.

The project was proactively brought to the attention of the media and was picked up by various media. All articles published on the project were archived and can be viewed on the website.

See online: <http://www.afvt.org>

4.3 Preparation

As a victim organisation, general preparation is needed before engaging with the media. This implies a communication strategy and plan, including a press policy, a practical set of rules how to deal with the press. In this plan, determine what the communication goals and objectives are, describe the role of the victim organisation, and if possible, try to be the link between the victims and the media. As a

victim organisation, it is important to know the victims you work with in order to choose the right spokesperson with the best-suited ability to speak with the media.

In addition, victim organisations can support victims in dealing with the media by counselling and to increase their self-esteem. However, do not allow this to result in slick stories that lack authenticity. When preparing a victim to speak with the media, provide them with two or three examples of projects or programmes from your organisation, which makes it easier to explain what the organisation is doing. After a media performance, check the social media to see how the story was received by the public and for feedback.

Other lessons learned on how to prepare for media attention follow.

- Think in advance about how personal the story needs to be. Journalists love personal stories. Stories cannot be taken back once they are published.
- Before an interview, find out about the media channel, its quality, outreach and agenda, previous similar news items, and the journalist.
- Master each part of the message and adapt the message according to the media request.
- Hastily produced programmes with a broad scope tend to give journalists too vague an idea of what the organisation does.
- Victims and victim organisations should be aware of the effect of media exposure on victims and their families, both in the short term and in the long run. Media will get people out of their anonymous life. Media products will be easy to trace over a long period and be reused entirely or partly for broadcasting and publishing. In order to manage the consequences of becoming a public figure, the victims have to be supported and counselled by the organisations.

4.4 Media relations

A sustainable relationship with the media is key. Under these circumstances, they can offer a great deal of support in spreading the message and work of the victim organisation. In order to do this, invest in the relationship, and remain of interest to the media (as described in the section on content).

The following recommendations will help maintain a lasting relationship with the media.

- Select journalists and media channels to work with, focusing on those of interest for building a long-term relationship.
- Try to be perceived by the media as a specific actor/expert in the field of victims of terrorism.
- Produce a press policy and appoint a spokesperson for the organisation.
- Maintain contact with the press, and archive all relevant media items.
- Exclusive stories can be effective, as these put journalists in a unique position. On the other hand, though, this might also cause other media to neglect the story. This risk can be minimised by not giving exclusivity to the same journalist/medium all the times. It is also important to keep a neutral position, in the sense that publishing exclusively in right-wing or left-wing media could give your story a perceived political slant.

Chapter 5: Cooperation with formers

Cooperation between victims of terrorism and formers can work to raise radicalisation awareness and help prevent violent extremism. However, this is not the only solution for preventing violent

extremism. Such cooperation is of a sensitive nature, and has certain preconditions which will be stated in this chapter. Risks should be minimised, and certainly, not every former will be capable of cooperating with victims, and vice versa.

Cooperation with formers and victims can produce a useful narrative only if the formers are deradicalised, and are able to explain why and how they realised that their violent extremism were the wrong means to reach their goals. Formers should condemn the terroristic acts/ideas before telling their story to an audience (i.e. they should not be only disengaged, but also deradicalised). Participating former radical activists in the work of CVE must have distanced themselves from their extremist thinking or behaviour by renouncing a particular group or rejecting the violence that they once used or condoned.

A possible complicating factor in some situations is that perpetrators may consider themselves victims as well. Sometimes, as in a civil war, people can be in two positions, i.e. both victim and perpetrator. Moreover, perpetrators may consider themselves as victims of their circumstances (e.g. due to their socio-economic position).

In some countries, formers and victims cooperate in projects for creating awareness of the dangers of violent extremism, as in the United Kingdom and Ireland, where a number of such programmes are run. In other countries, however, such cooperation is considered taboo, whether on emotional, political or ethical grounds.

The West London Initiative serves as an example of work with ‘formers’. The organisation operates at a grass-roots level and is staffed both by individuals coming from similar backgrounds to its target audience, and skilled and experienced practitioners.

This allows the organisation to deliver a diverse range of interventions, events, projects and workshops, where the aim is to educate, empower, build resilience and promote participation in civic society. A significant factor is the ability to access hard-to-reach young people through bespoke innovative grass-roots intervention methods tailored to the needs of the very person(s) engaged.

A ‘former’ is a former radical activist, someone who once had extremist ideas or behaviour. A former is deradicalised and/or disengaged.

At the very least, disengagement must imply behavioural changes such as rejection of violence (Horgan and Braddock, 2010).

To be deradicalised, however, a more fundamental change of the ideals underlying this behaviour also needs to have taken place (Metzger, 2013; Ganor and Falk, 2013).

5.1 The power of two sides of the coin

The efficacy of cooperation between formers and victims depends on various factors, and differs across situations. The advantage of such cooperation is that the audience hears both sides of the

story, which heightens the narrative/testimony, the message, and in effect, understanding of the message.

Using both stories can help to deglamourise terrorists as well as (the effect of) violent extremism: for instance, when a former discusses life in prison, and the victim the loss of a loved one. The testimonies can also help the audience better understand the 'other', through such personal stories. It emphasises the human aspect, and counters the dehumanisation of the 'other'.

Testimonies of victims and formers can also be an effective (public) mediation tool, and may help break a cycle of negativity, repairing broken relationships and communities. In some situations, the audience may look up to formers, and here the impact of the former may be more effective than the story of the victim.

Furthermore, the victim and former can learn from each other and one another's stories — working together as victim and perpetrator is also an act of self-healing. Their cooperation may also serve as an example for other victims and formers.

5.2 Prerequisites for cooperation

Before beginning a cooperation, it is necessary to make a distinction between the different actors. Besides victims and formers, testimonies of the relatives of both groups are of interest, as are testimonies from people who were once on the brink of becoming extremist, but withdrew. This group's interest lies in elements such as what stopped them at the last instance, what the resilience factors were and how can these be triggered. Relatives of former terrorists might be less confronting and less difficult to cooperate with, for the victim.

The prerequisites for the use of testimonies also apply to cooperation with victims and formers. The cooperation should form part of a larger programme, the former and the victim should be well prepared and supported, and mentally ready to engage, and the audience should be informed and prepared beforehand and debriefed afterwards.

The moderator (teacher, trainer, discussion leader, etc.) must discuss the subject and context in advance, explain the historical facts, manage expectations and reinforce the audience's resilience and capacity for critical thinking. Furthermore, they must steer the subsequent discussion so as to maximise the positive effect of the testimonies. Whether a former and a victim are ready to give their testimony depends on the individuals and the circumstances. Furthermore, the victim and former should make clear what their needs are, what they can deal with, how and with whom they will cooperate, etc.

When testimonies of victims and formers are used in the same programme/on the same occasion, they need not be moderated. There is no hierarchy of testimonies, and there should be no sense of one party having 'moral superiority' over the other. Censoring a testimony would be counterproductive. Testimonies from victims and formers should be left as they are: these are personal stories and both parties are entitled to tell them. If a victim or former is unable to handle

telling the story, cooperation cannot occur. Prior to cooperating, it is key that both persons meet, get to know each other better and prepare their cooperation thoroughly.

Formers can become the focus of attention, as their testimonies hold appeal for youngsters in particular, due to the 'action and adventure' element often considered attractive. Formers were actively fighting for a specific goal. This might cause a glamorized picture of the person and the extremist ideology. Both parties should be aware of this bias, and try to keep the attention balanced. One option is to include the testimony of the former as a smaller part of the programme.

Formers should not focus only on their personal, biographical reasons for becoming radicalised (the 'why'). There may have been a number of personal problems contributing to their radicalisation. But personal, biographical reasons cannot constitute a full and comprehensive explanation for committing terroristic acts. Instead, they should explain what choices they had, what their alternatives were, what people they met, etc. (the 'how', the process). There needs to be a mapping of critical junctures and defining events that were instrumental in the lead-up to the violent act.

Cooperation can be realised in various ways: direct testimonies presented together in one place with an audience, or testimonies written or recorded on film. The choice of medium depends on the goal, situation, audience and desired effect. The organisation using the testimonies should be aware of the local context, and use those testimonies and channels of communication depending on the local context (tailoring them to the situation). The context and needs of the victim and former have to be considered because they can influence their message and provoke some difficulties. It's important to know specifically if the victim and the former shared the same terrorist attack, the same conflict or the same form of violent extremism (right-wing or red-wing extremism, jihadism...) in order to prepare their intervention.

More research is necessary on the effect of testimonies of formers and victims, and certainly on the impact and effect of their cooperation.