

Strengthening Support to Victims of Terrorism

Advancing Implementation of the Madrid Memorandum on Good Practices for Assistance to Victims of Terrorism

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BACKGROUND

While attention in the media and public discourse in the aftermath of terrorist attacks often focuses on the perpetrators and governmental countermeasures, victims and survivors of terrorism are obviously the most directly affected. They are the victims of indiscriminate violence that is intended to spread fear and hatred among society. Victims and their families can suffer from physical, psychological, social, and financial consequences that last far longer than any government response or media spotlight.



September 11, 2001.
Photo: Library of Congress, Don Halasy.

Despite universal solidarity with the plight of victims and survivors of terrorism, surprisingly few countries have put into place appropriate measures and structures to support immediate, let alone longer term needs of survivors and victims' families. Additionally, victims often lack access to and a strong position in the criminal justice system—a problem that extends beyond the specific crime of terrorism. Even more underdeveloped are empowerment programs for victims that facilitate their ability to play an important role in countering violent extremism (CVE). From professional media training to ensure that their stories remain part of the public debate, to the active participation of victims in outreach activities to prevent radicalization to violent extremism from taking hold in communities, states and other stakeholders can support the powerful voices of victims and survivors.

In September 2013, the 30 members of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) adopted the *Madrid Memorandum on Good Practices for Assistance to Victims of Terrorism Immediately after the Attack and in Criminal Proceedings*. This document lists several good practices for countries to consider as they implement assistance measures for victims of terrorism, including crafting legal frameworks and guidelines for the provision of victim services and rights, actions to be taken immediately after an attack, and ways to support and involve victims in the criminal justice process.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

To further advance implementation of the Madrid Memorandum and its plan of action, the Global Center on Cooperative Security (Global Center) will organize two regional workshops from 2014-2015 with support from the U.S. Department of State, in close cooperation with the GCTF CVE Working Group. The two-day workshops, which will be convened in South and Southeast Asia, will focus on sharing experiences regarding:

- The importance of the voices of victims of terrorism in society;
- The lessons learned from experiences of victims and survivors with first responders;
- The importance of having national strategies, plans, and procedures to effectively and efficiently respond to a terrorist attack and facilitate immediate support to victims;
- The value of international good practices regarding treatment of victims and survivors of a terrorist attack, government and civil society responses, victim's assistance, and first responder preparedness and procedures during a mass casualty event, as well as media and public relations in the aftermath of a terrorist attack and trials of suspected terrorists;
- The benefits of government and civil society provision of resources to support victims; and,
- The importance of the government in establishing immediate and consistent contact with victims and their families to relay information and assist with criminal proceedings.

Participants in each meeting will include:

- Victims and survivors of terrorist attacks;
- First responders, government officials responsible for policies and strategies relating to victims of terrorist attacks, and criminal justice officials that specialize in terrorist cases;
- Local, regional, and global civil society practitioners who engage with victims of terrorism as well as those representing organizations that support and empower victims of terrorism;
- Members of the media who cover terrorist attacks, their aftermath, and trials of suspected terrorists; and
- Mental health professionals with expertise in immediate and long-term impacts of terrorism.

These workshops are intended to raise awareness regarding the importance of supporting victims of terrorism and existing mechanisms and good practices that can be drawn upon in providing such support. At the same time, the workshops will build the capacity and expertise of first responders, law enforcement, and civil society actors in South and Southeast Asia to meet the needs of terrorism victims and survivors and foster resilience among those who experience terror attacks firsthand.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL CENTER ON COOPERATIVE SECURITY

The Global Center works with governments, international organizations, and civil society to develop and implement comprehensive and sustainable responses to complex international security challenges through collaborative policy research, context-sensitive programming, and capacity development. In collaboration with a global network of expert practitioners and partner organizations, the Global Center fosters stronger multilateral partnerships and convenes key stakeholders to support integrated and inclusive security policies across national, regional, and global levels.

The Global Center will be working together with various members of the victims' community, including Ms. Carie Lemack, co-founder of the Global Survivors Network, and Mr. Max Boon, co-founder of AIDA (Alliance for a Peaceful Indonesia).

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