



## **How to Approach Victims of Terrorism**

### GUIDELINES FOR THE COMMUNICATION MEDIA WHEN DEALING WITH AND APPROACHING VICTIMS OF TERRORISM

- » When speaking with journalists, victims may experience feelings of anxiety. It is important that the journalist show restraint so that the victim gains confidence thus reducing the victim's nervousness. In order to do so:
- » Before speaking to victims it is important to give them information as to how the interview is going to be carried out and what points are going to be addressed in order to reduce their anxiety and uncertainty, as well as to give them a chance to bring up any doubts they may have regarding the interview itself.
- » It is important that eye contact is direct and that your eyes stay at the same level as those of the victim, being neither above nor below them.
- » The tone of voice used should be soft, warm and slow.
- » Make sure the expression on your face is friendly, close to a smile.

- » Questions should be asked clearly, simply and concisely, in order to facilitate their understanding and, therefore, make it easier to answer them.
- » The journalist's body language plays an important part in making the victim feel calmer and more trusting. Holding one's arms down on each side of the body, instead of crossing them, encourages people to talk; keeping eye contact indicates friendliness and interest in whatever they have to say.
- » The interpersonal space between the victim and the journalist should be relatively close, while respecting their relevant vital space or comfort zone.
- » Avoid questions that require giving specific details on the traumatic situation, considering that for some people it is easy to respond, while, for others, doing so would trigger their re-living the experience and the symptoms.
- » In the event that the victim breaks down, it is advisable to maintain eye contact, thus showing understanding and empathy for their situation. In such cases, physical contact meant as an "encouragement" or "support" is suitable. Stop the interview if necessary, and continue later when the person has recovered and the situation has become more stable.
- » Suitable questions are those relating to the victim's present condition, what their needs are "now", how they are feeling today..... After a terrorist attack, most victims need people to continue caring about them, in the long run also.