



UNITED NATIONS

SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF TERRORISM



giving a face and a voice • protecting dignity • giving status



defending legal rights • providing medical and psycho-social support



providing financial assistance • improving media coverage



building solidarity • countering terrorism



*Guests of the Secretary-General,
Symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism*

**THIS REPORT IS DEDICATED TO
VICTIMS OF TERRORISM ALL OVER THE WORLD:**

MAY THEY FIND JUSTICE AND PEACE.

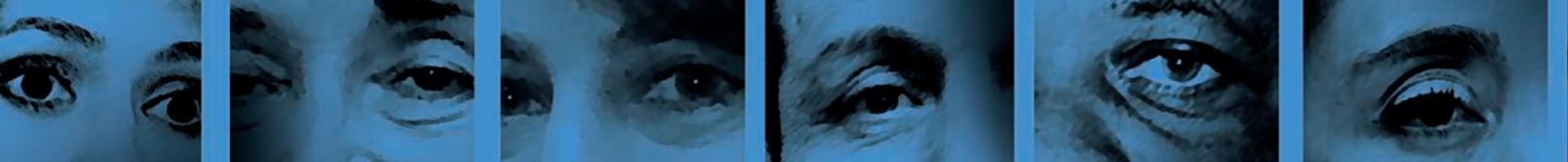
FOREWORD BY THE **SECRETARY-GENERAL**

The needs of victims of terrorism have for far too long gone unrecognized and unmet. For the first time ever at the global level, victims, Governments, experts and civil society came together on 9 September 2008 to participate in the Secretary-General's Symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism. Uniting behind this common cause, they were able to overcome their political differences and take a first step towards addressing the concerns and needs of a brave group that has until now been largely neglected.

Over the past decade, far too many people around the world have suffered loss and injury from terrorism, including a growing number of United Nations staff. For this reason, I felt that it was imperative that the United Nations open its doors to victims of terrorism and provide a platform where the voices of victims could be heard; where victims, Member States and civil society could share with one another their best practices in supporting victims; and where a dialogue on the needs of victims could be initiated.

Victims of terrorism are the real heroes in the global struggle against terrorism. Those of us who had the privilege of participating in the Symposium were honoured and humbled by the courage of our guests. Not only were they willing to relive some of their most personal and painful memories with us, but they were also prepared to face the pressure and possible risks associated with going public.





The Symposium showed that victims themselves—while always remembering the tragic events of the past—want to find a way to look forward. I now call on the international community to join with victims in building a positive momentum for change. I pledge the support of the United Nations family in helping to ensure that victims of terrorism have their voices heard, are treated with dignity and respect, and have their rights respected and needs met.

I have been heartened by the positive responses to the Symposium. Many Member States have indicated their commitment to join in a global effort to support victims of terrorism. Members of civil society have indicated their eagerness to work with Governments at the international, national and local levels to develop awareness campaigns and support structures. The international media, through its broad coverage of the event, has already begun to contribute to our common goal of putting a human face to the tragic consequences of terrorism. In doing so, it has begun to counter one of the conditions conducive to fostering terrorism: the dehumanization of victims.

However, this is only a beginning. We must carry these discussions forward in order to build adequate systems of support and solidarity with victims of terrorism. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, unanimously adopted by United Nations Member States in 2006, called for ending the dehumanization of victims of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We have embarked on the journey to give practical meaning to these commitments. Let us go forward in mutual respect, determination and solidarity.

BAN Ki-moon,
Secretary-General of the United Nations

INTRODUCTION



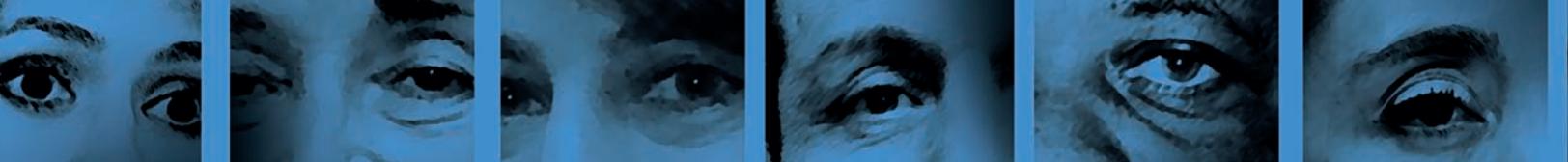
Terrorism can affect anyone, anywhere. It targets all ethnic groups, religions, nationalities and civilizations. It attacks humanity itself. And it is for the sake of humanity that we must create a global forum for your voices and listen to you, the victims. Your stories of how terrorism has affected your lives are our strongest argument for why it can never be justified. By giving a human face to the painful consequences of terrorism, you help build a global culture against it.

BAN Ki-moon,
*Secretary-General of the United Nations,
9 September 2008*

On 9 September 2008, the Secretary-General of the United Nations convened the first ever global Symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism in New York.¹ The Symposium brought together 18 victims of terrorist attacks and 10 experts from around the world to discuss how to assist victims of terrorism. Participants also included Member States, permanent observers, regional organizations, civil society and the media.

¹ The victims invited were either individuals who themselves were targets or family members of those who had been the targets of terrorist acts as defined by the 16 international legal instruments for the prevention and punishment of terrorist acts (<http://www.un.org/terrorism/instruments>).





The idea of convening a symposium to support victims of terrorism traces its roots back to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy which was adopted unanimously by Member States in 2006. The Strategy, which was reviewed and reaffirmed by all Member States just days before the Symposium, urges an end to the dehumanization of victims of terrorism; the consolidation of national systems of assistance that promote the needs of victims of terrorism; the promotion of international solidarity in support of victims of terrorism; and the protection of the rights of victims of terrorism.

The purpose of the Symposium was to give victims a human face, to provide a forum for discussing concrete steps to assist victims in coping with their experiences, to share best practices and to highlight measures already taken by Member States and non-governmental organizations to support and empower victims.

This report summarizes the key themes discussed at the Symposium: the importance of giving victims a face and a voice; protecting their dignity; giving victims legal status and defending their legal rights; providing victims with medical, psycho-social and financial support; building solidarity with victims; improving media coverage of victims; and focusing on the link between victims and counter-terrorism efforts more generally. The report draws on suggestions from the victims themselves as well as proposals from Governments, experts and members of civil society. It concludes with a set of recommendations for consideration by the international community.

GIVING VICTIMS A FACE AND A VOICE

Terrorists, by their chosen methods of action, are already under the media spotlight. However, what is essential is to create conditions in which the death of a human being becomes extremely costly to the terrorists. To speak of the victims, to give them a face, an identity, in turn reduces the population's passivity—their implicit resignation—towards the terrorists' crimes. To mobilize the population in the victim's favour in turn reduces the terrorists' temptation to carry out summary executions, to be careless or trigger-happy. If there is no mobilization, the victim is condemned to becoming another statistic, a unit in a sinister accounting of "profit and loss".



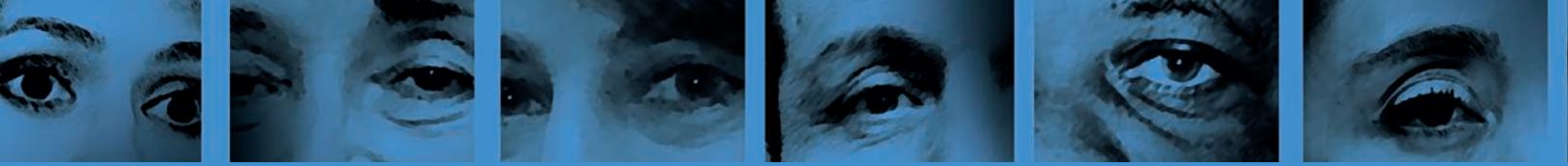
Ingrid Betancourt,
held hostage in Colombia (2002-2008)

Victims are co-opted by many parties, yet all too often victims don't have a voice. Too often they are nobody's responsibility.



Rachel North,
*victim of a terrorist bombing
in the United Kingdom (2005)*





Giving victims of terrorism a voice and presenting them as what they are—real people of flesh and blood whose rights have been severely violated—was one of the main themes of the Symposium.

Several of the victims participating in the Symposium highlighted the fact that in the public coverage and discussion of terrorism the focus is most often on the terrorists—who they are, what they did and what made them do it. Very little attention is given to those who have been attacked, injured and traumatized and, in the worst case, to those who have lost their lives or their loved ones. This, they underlined, should be changed.

Participants observed that in their fight for what they believe is a greater cause, terrorists try to depersonalize victims reducing them to mere numbers or statistics. The international community, they stressed, has a responsibility to do the exact opposite. It must see and treat victims as real individuals—with hopes, dreams, families and daily lives that have been shattered and sometimes destroyed through terrorist violence. In doing so, the international community would not only show respect for the victims and show the world the true consequences of terrorism, but would also, hopefully, deter some potential terrorists from committing such heinous crimes.

PROTECTING VICTIMS' DIGNITY

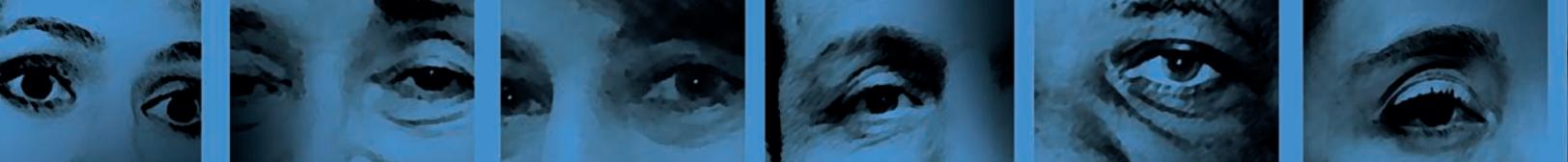
Many participants urged the international community, national Governments and local communities to protect the dignity of victims of terrorism. According to victims and experts, this should be done through a range of actions that span from simply acknowledging that a person and his or her family have been victimized by an act of terrorism to providing concrete support to victims. As one victim told Symposium participants:

Despite the appearance, I am not any single mother living in the calm suburbs of Geneva; how could I sit for coffee with my neighbour when overwhelmed by nausea after my husband's belongings retrieved from the rubble were delivered to my home address? How can my child share his feelings and questions with his five-year-old friends and teachers, when he is the only child in his colourful pre-school who's had a father blown up in pieces? There are still days I feel like I'm split in two, the normalcy of my daily life, and somewhere inside of me pieces of horror. Acknowledgement by the community and institutions is therefore essential. Support to victims of terrorism, in a sense, starts from that acknowledgement. Today's Symposium has been a very important step in this direction.



Laura Dolci,
victim of a terrorist bombing in Iraq (2003)





One victim stressed how important it was for those surviving a victim's death to have some material evidence of their loved one's demise. For this reason, it is crucial that government authorities have proper identification techniques for those killed in a terrorist attack. Citing her own example, she told the assembled:

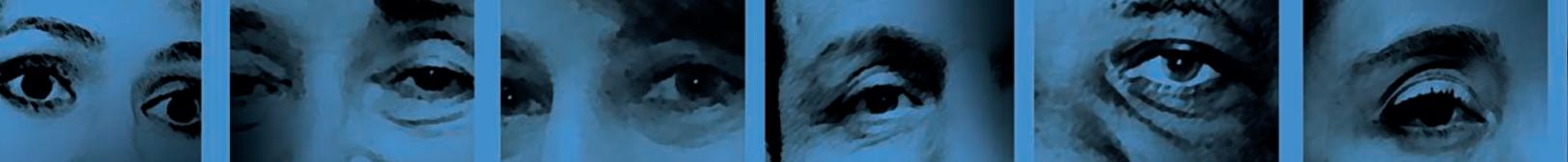
In April of 2007, more than five and a half years after my mom's murder, my sister and I received a phone call from the New York City Medical Examiner's Office. They told us that they had identified my mom's left foot, complete, with her ankle, and it had not been burned. Apparently it had fallen from the sky and landed in a pile at Ground Zero when her plane hit the building. They told us that they believed that her body shattered into countless numbers of pieces and that somehow her foot had stayed intact ... I carried my mom's foot on a train from New York City back home to Boston. The whole three and a half hours I kept her foot in my lap, and it's sad to tell you how light a foot is, but I was so glad to have at least part of her and to get to bring her home. And yet, as tragic and as awful as all this is, I recognize, sitting among all these people, that I am one of the lucky ones. Even among 9/11 families I am a lucky one. Eleven hundred and twenty six 9/11 families have never brought a piece of their loved one home. I am lucky that I live in a country that is continuing to pursue identification techniques and that is enabling scientists to identify bone fragments years after they are found.



Carie Lemack,
victim of a terrorist attack in the United States (2001)

Following a terrorist attack, victims are often faced with lengthy administrative processes as they seek to qualify and receive access to medical and psycho-social care and reintegrate themselves into jobs, schools and communities. Many victims stated that reinforcing and protecting victims' dignity during these long, difficult and at times personally intrusive processes is essential.





GIVING VICTIMS LEGAL STATUS AND DEFENDING THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS



Victims of terrorism have suffered acts of savagery that have attacked our physical and psychological integrity as well as our most fundamental human right—the right to life, to live in peace and safety.

Joaquin Vidal Ortiz,
victim of a terrorist bombing in Spain (1991)

We are victims of terrorism because our rights have been violated; our right to life, our right to health, our right to justice and truth. Supporting victims of terrorism means, first, to acknowledge our plight and, secondly, to support us in claiming our rights so that we can rise from being victims to full-fledged right-holders again ... It is my profound hope that this Symposium will mark the beginning of a long journey together; a journey of awareness-raising, solidarity and action.

Laura Dolci,
victim of a terrorist bombing in Iraq (2003)

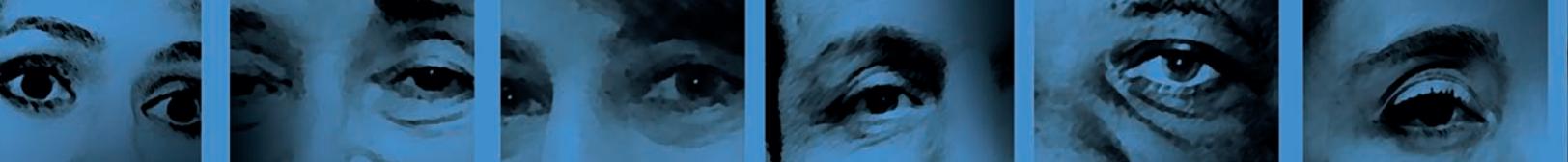
Symposium participants underscored the vital importance of granting legal status to victims. They condemned terrorism as a serious violation of basic human rights. Recognizing that the human rights of all human beings are protected under international human rights law, participants noted the importance of reaffirming and actualizing these rights for victims of terrorism. A number of participants called for giving victims of terrorism international status. This, they argued, would acknowledge their existence and their plight, help those who want to provide assistance for victims and reassure those who have been victimized.

The legal status of victims of terrorism varies from State to State. In national legislation passed by one Member State, victims of terrorism have the same legal status as victims of civil war. In the country in question, a national association of victims of terrorism played a crucial role in advocating for their legal recognition.

In addition to the importance of according legal status, participants discussed the actual defence of victims' rights. A Member State described how new laws had given representatives of victims associations the right to participate in criminal trials in support of victims. These laws also mandate that victims of terrorism have a right to legal assistance. Another Member State described how its federal police have established a family investigative liaison officer programme which provides victims with regular reporting on the progress of court trials following a terrorist attack.

A number of participants emphasized that one of the main ways to honour victims of terrorism and to fight terrorism effectively is to bring the perpetrators of terrorist acts to justice. They stressed that international cooperation is essential to achieving this aim. As one Member





State said, many of the most recent forms of terrorism are transnational in nature and therefore require international instruments to foster police and judicial cooperation. The counter-terrorism conventions and resolutions of the United Nations were mentioned as important instruments in this respect; but participants noted that regional approaches and cooperation are also highly relevant and should be developed. In this context, a Member State referred to the example of the European Union which has established a framework of judicial cooperation instruments among European States. These, it was argued, have already proved effective in many cases, particularly those pertaining to extradition proceedings.

Legal status, legal access and actual defence of victims' rights are closely interlinked. Several participants suggested that terrorism should be included among the crimes under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. It was, however, acknowledged that this would become possible only once the United Nations Member States agree on a single definition of terrorism, and several participants urged Member States to work actively towards that end. Others further suggested that the United Nations should provide a platform for sharing legal best practices and national legislation in support of victims.



We, the victims of terrorism, have seen our belief systems and our basic confidence in the world shattered... We need civil society and the State to firmly stand against terrorism... We need not only those who execute, but also those who plan the murder of innocent civilians, to be brought to justice.

Juan Antonio García Casquero,
victim of a terrorism bombing in Spain (1992)

PROVIDING MEDICAL AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS



A victim of a terrorist action can be affected by a tiny reminder of the incident and relive it again and again. I can say that I still get nervous when I see closed items, garbage cans and ownerless materials.

Osman Kaya,
*victim of a terrorist bombing in Turkey
(2003)*

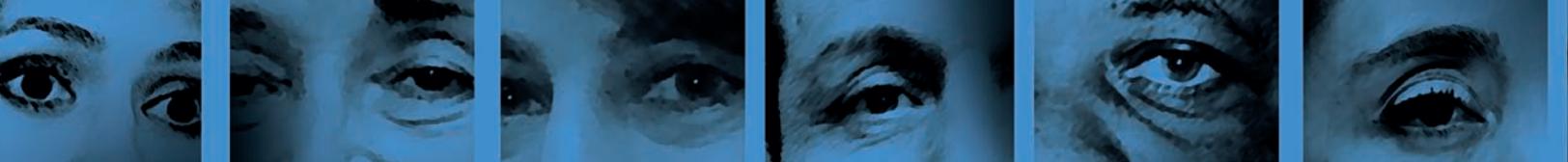


I, my two daughters and their grandfather were held as hostages in the terrorist act in Beslan in 2004. Three hundred thirty four people died, including 186 children; 783 people were injured, and thousands suffered the heaviest psychological trauma, from which many will never recover.

Aleta Gasinova,
held hostage in Russia (2004)

Numerous Symposium participants emphasized that physical and psycho-social treatment for victims of terrorism should be free and easily accessible. As medical and psychological problems may persist,





they stressed that the time frame for access to free treatment should be extended beyond the immediate post-event period.

One Member State explained that following a recent terrorist attack, the Government had set up an assistance centre with a website and a phone helpline to help victims through the crisis. This centre ensured that the right level and kind of support, therapeutic treatment, practical advice and counseling were made available. A survivor of that terrorist attack characterized the assistance centre as a lifesaver, and mentioned that it continues to care for hundreds of victims, including some who have only recently asked for help, three years after the attack.

The fact that the need for treatment can continue for a long period of time was confirmed by several experts who stressed that victims often suffer from physical injuries and psychological trauma years after the attack. Thus, for example, a victim, who was severely injured in a bomb attack in the 1980s, explained how after refusing a leg amputation she had been through 66 surgeries. During the first of these, she contracted HIV/AIDS from an infected blood transfusion. Her 66th surgery took place this year. Another victim told how, even a decade after a terrorist bombing, she and many of her colleagues continued to require medical attention and psychological treatment. She underlined that this has particularly serious implications for victims in developing countries, like her own, where public health insurance does not exist. In such instances, she said, survivors are, in effect, served a death sentence: they lose their jobs, their livelihoods and are ultimately reduced to destitution.

A number of victims and experts stressed the importance of having all aspects of treatment and aid provided in the same place—a

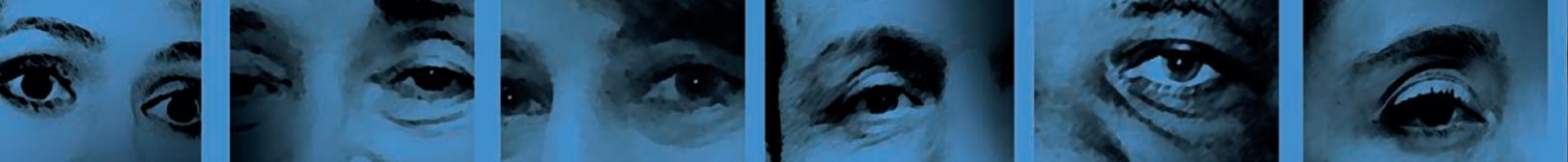
one-stop-shop. Several Member States and other participants emphasized the importance of providing accurate information to the victims about available support after a terrorist attack. They stressed that mechanisms should be in place to ensure that such support is structured, systematic and easily accessible.

In terms of immediate assistance and international cooperation, one Member State mentioned its willingness to deploy an emergency response team to the scene of a terrorist attack. The emergency response team could, for instance, include a medical team, police officers and psychological counselors to support the victims of the incident.

While participants stressed the importance of professional assistance and treatment over time in ensuring that victims receive appropriate help, several also highlighted the importance of support from local communities, non-governmental organizations and civil society. They encouraged governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to work together in order to provide a comprehensive approach to supporting victims of terrorism.

Several participants emphasized the important roles played by national and regional associations of victims in supporting survivors of terrorism in financial, moral and humanitarian terms, and in increasing awareness about terrorism. One participant described how her Government had set up a commission for victims and survivors with a remit to safeguard and promote the interests of victims; review the adequacy and effectiveness of services and law; develop a forum for victims to meet, discuss and resolve issues; and advise the Government. A general recommendation that emerged from this discussion was that victims associations establish mechanisms for cooperating internationally





in order to benefit from each other's experiences and best practices. As one participant, who lost numerous relatives and friends during a suicide bombing attack at his wedding reception in 2005 and who now works with a national victims association, stated:



I would like to take this opportunity to address other victims associations: Let's work together. Let's help others who could one day face what we had to face.

Ashraf Al-Khaled,
victim of a terrorist bombing in Jordan (2005)

PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS

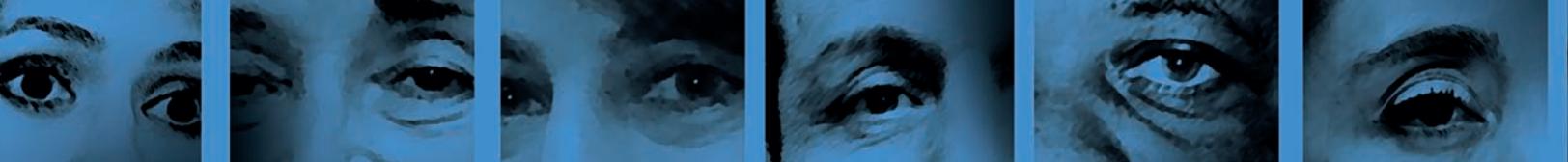
Prior to the U.S. Embassy bombing, I was working as a trade development officer for the Kenyan Government. After the bombing I had severe psychological scars, and I remained in a mental hospital for two years. During that time, I lost my job, lost my Government housing, and I now live in the slums of Nairobi. I have thought about suicide many times. This forum has brought hope to me. At last someone is putting an emphasis on survivors and not on terrorists ... We are not asking for charity. It is justice we seek.



Naomi Kerongo Monchari,
victim of a terrorist bombing in Kenya (1998)

The economic repercussions of a terrorist attack on a victim's life can be almost as devastating as the psychological and physical scars. The need to provide financial assistance to victims was a major issue raised by many participants at the Symposium. As one Member State said, institutionalizing assistance to victims should be a cornerstone of every





country's counter-terrorism strategy. At the same time, as the discussion revealed, while compensation is central to supporting victims, it can be difficult to implement, and different Member States have adopted different policies.

One Member State presented six steps it had gone through to establish its compensation policy:

1. Building a conceptual framework to determine the definition of a victim; that is, who should receive compensation;
2. Concretely deciding who the victims are and creating a single national register of victims and recipients;
3. Analysing the characteristics of victims, such as gender, age and socio-economic status;
4. Establishing an institutional framework and an inter-agency committee;
5. Creating a legal framework for compensation policy which includes the right to justice, education, health and psycho-social care;
6. Establishing a social framework to place the issue on the public agenda and increase public awareness in order to help the victims know their rights while creating national solidarity with them.

Other States also presented their compensation schemes and financial assistance programmes. The importance of free medical treatment was stressed by several participants. One Member State explained

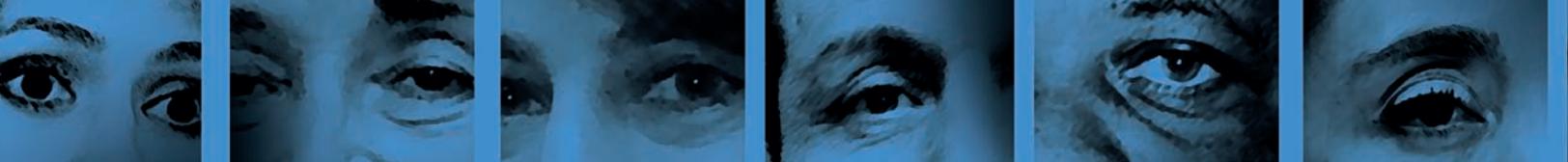
how the compensation scheme of its central Government was complemented by assistance programmes supplied by the various state governments of the country.

Not all countries have such comprehensive policies in place. A participant mentioned how his victims association tried to fill this gap by looking for funds to provide, among other things, health insurance and to establish support for surviving children.

Another participant described a charitable relief fund that was established in her country following a terrorist attack to administer public donations to survivors who experienced financial hardship. This fund provides speedy, non-bureaucratic financial assistance to victims.

A Member State proposed to establish a voluntary United Nations fund, not for compensation, but for financial support. The same Member State proposed to contribute to such an initiative and envisaged that other States would follow. The proposal was warmly welcomed by both victims and experts.





BUILDING SOLIDARITY WITH VICTIMS OF TERRORISM



I do remember days when I had lost hope. But then I was visited by people from so many nations who came with humanitarian assistance to our country. Their solidarity gave us hope and we knew we were not alone.

Henry Kessy,
*victim of a terrorist bombing
in the United Republic of Tanzania (1998)*

The support of my Government and my local community has been immeasurable. The opportunity to be guided by good and giving people has me engaged in life again. Many around me have focused on the good in life and on helping others, particularly our young people. However, the impact of this terrorist attack is generational and entire families will struggle with this for a lifetime. There must be ongoing Government and community support, counseling and information opportunities for victims and families. This will never go away.

Ben Borgia,
victim of a terrorist bombing in Bali (2002)

Participants broadly called for a multi-pronged approach to providing help and support to victims that would benefit from the experience and resources available at the international, national and local levels. The importance of general awareness and solidarity with the victims was stressed by numerous participants as central to the support of victims of terrorism nationally as well as internationally. This, they argued, is essential to the fight against terrorism and the prevention of its horrible consequences.

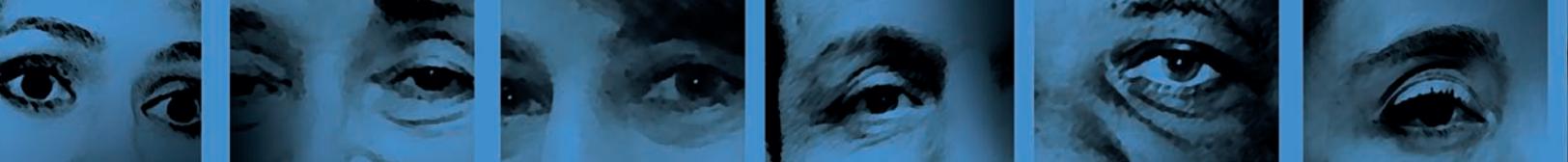
In addition to assistance provided by formal governmental and non-governmental organizations, a victim described how an informal support network of survivors had helped her overcome the trauma of the attack and return to normal life. Some participants focused on special events or actions devised to bring people together in support and solidarity. For example, one participant described how road shows that included dancing and singing brought people together to talk about their feelings and fears after a terrorist attack in his country.

A Member State described how it dedicates one day a year to commemorating all victims, stressing that this is an important way of building national solidarity and mobilizing world leaders, media and younger generations. This idea resonated with several participants who proposed the establishment of an international day commemorating victims of terrorism. Such a day, they argued, would help foster solidarity and mobilize international public opinion against extremist violence and terrorism.

Because a people who forgets its history is condemned to relive it, the memory of the victims has to be preserved.

Françoise Rudetzki,
victim of a terrorist bombing in
France (1983)





IMPROVING MEDIA COVERAGE OF VICTIMS

The role of the media is crucial. By calling for a worldwide reflection into our responsibility towards the victims, we are also sounding an alarm regarding the role of the media. There is an urgent need for the media to acknowledge not only their power of mobilization, but also the very real impact they can have in saving individual lives. This of course gives rise to a fundamental question: is the media exposure of a victim a good thing or a bad thing? My answer on this is unequivocal: media exposure is absolutely essential.

Ingrid Betancourt,
held hostage in Colombia (2002-2008)

The media coverage of victims of terrorism is a delicate and complex matter. As several Symposium participants stressed: on the one hand, the victims and the cruelties committed against them should never be forgotten; on the other, explicit photographs and descriptions of the horror they have suffered may reactivate traumatic memories and subject the victims to repeated agony.

While several participants criticized the media for its sometimes hard and insensitive coverage of terrorism and its victims, others cited

examples of how the media has played a positive role in the effort to support victims of terrorism. One participant, for instance, described the useful role played by the media in the aftermath of a terrorist attack in his home country in facilitating public discussions and mass counseling. This, he felt, had helped people to cope with the horrors they had experienced. He also stressed how important it is for Governments and civil society to build a good working relationship with the media to ensure optimal support for victims of terrorism.

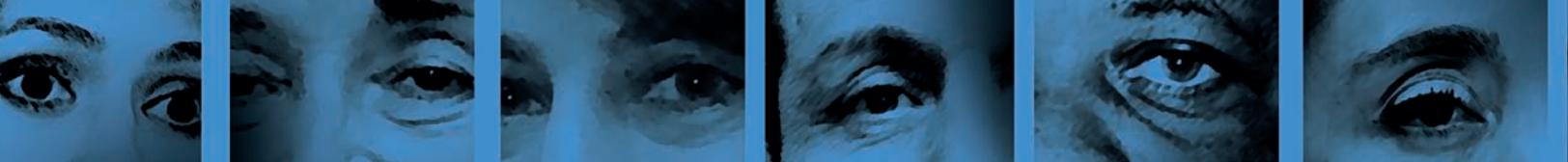
Others emphasized the important role that the media can play in mobilizing the population in favour of the victims and against the perpetrators of terrorism. In order to maximize the helpful impact of the media, a number of participants discussed possible ways of sensitizing media coverage. One participant, a former president of CNN International, pointed to the importance of relevant education and training of journalists:

In the headlong rush for a story, what must we media managers do to teach journalists about sensitivity in reporting? Journalists need to be trained, from a very early stage, on how to cover victims generally and victims of terrorism in particular. That means training integral to their journalism studies. They need to better understand what shock and trauma is and does, what post-traumatic stress means and how reporters should react to it.



Chris Cramer,
held hostage in the United Kingdom (1980)





Some further proposals were put forward by a participant whose sister was killed in a terrorist bombing:



The most important aspect would be to initiate worldwide flashes, programmes, documentaries, movies, reports and columns, to change the mindsets that drive people to violent acts of terror ... We need to give victims names and faces. We need to tell their stories ... We have to change this culture of violence to a culture of tolerance.

Rula Al-Farra,
victim of a terrorist bombing in Iraq (2003)

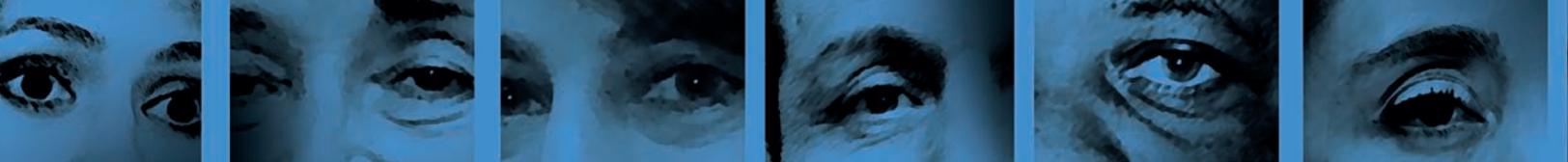
VICTIMS OF TERRORISM AND THE COUNTER-TERRORISM EFFORT

More than any Government or international agency, victims and survivors can prevent terrorism by sharing their experiences, proving to anyone susceptible to a message of violence, hatred and indiscriminate bloodshed that that message is flawed ... Those who have experienced terrorism are best able to show its true light—the horror, the pain, the destruction—and prove that there is nothing glorious, nothing sacrosanct, nothing pure or divine about it ... As Governments you can help and coordinate a platform for those victim voices and you can support them to get their very special, unique and powerful message out to the world.

Carie Lemack,
*victim of a terrorist attack in the
United States (2001)*

Many participants stated that victims have important roles to play in implementing Governments' counter-terrorism strategies. One Member State described how it involves victims in its public awareness





campaign against terrorism with a hope to limit the conditions conducive to terrorism. In a similar vein, another Member State described launching a campaign in local and regional print media to promote the cause of victims of terrorism and create awareness about their feelings of loss and pain. Finally, a number of participants called for the international community to take preventive action: to focus on reducing the conditions conducive to terrorism—thereby reducing the number of future victims of terrorism.

CONCLUSION

Terrorism infects nearly every corner of the world today. It belongs no less to the present and the future than to the past. The challenge to nations is to find and adopt policies that will end it. The challenge to individuals, to the victims who endure terrorism, is to find and adopt ways to survive the evil of the perpetrators of terrorism and to reaffirm our humanity, our dignity, our generosity and our optimism.



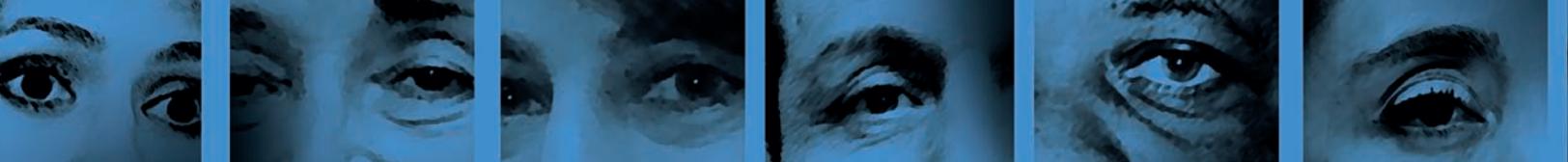
Arnold Roth,
victim of a terrorist bombing in Israel (2001)

The Symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism provided victims a unique opportunity to address the international community, and enabled victims, Member States, experts and civil society to share their experiences and lessons learned. The discussions illustrated that support for victims needs to be multidimensional, multidisciplinary, integrative and sustainable. A global dialogue was set in motion.

The Symposium on Supporting Victims of Terrorism provided an opportunity to work towards three major objectives:

First, it put a human face on the personal tragedies suffered by victims of terrorism, giving them a platform to share their stories and





to express their needs, concerns and hopes. It fostered better understanding in the international community on what can and must be done to support victims of terrorism, how victims' dignity can best be protected and how to build solidarity with victims.

Second, the Symposium initiated a dialogue among victims, Governments and non-governmental actors on how best to support victims of terrorism in the areas of legal rights, medical and psycho-social support, and financial assistance. This dialogue may lead to more sustained national and international action on supporting victims.

Third, the 2006 adoption and the recent reaffirmation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by all Member States have delivered the clear and unequivocal message that terrorism is never acceptable, no matter what the circumstances are. Supporting victims and listening to their voices are critical steps in advancing this common global commitment to combat terrorism, working to prevent further radicalization and terrorist activity, and protecting the human rights of victims and potential victims of terrorism. The Symposium thus served an important role in building a broad coalition within the United Nations against terrorism and in support of the increasing number of victims of terrorism worldwide.

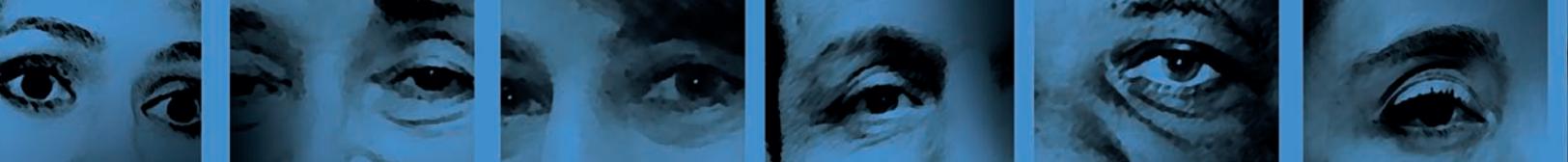
The United Nations is firmly committed to strengthening victims' voices and to continuing to serve as a forum for dialogue among victims, Member States and civil society.

SYMPOSIUM ON SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF TERRORISM

RECOMMENDATIONS BY PARTICIPANTS

- **Provide a virtual networking, communication and information hub for victims of terrorism, Government officials, experts, service providers and civil society.** Such a virtual platform or web portal could be used to share information, resources and best practices on supporting victims of terrorism; function as a networking tool to connect victims of terrorism with service providers and experts in the field; raise public awareness about victims' rights and needs; and bring violations of victims' rights to the public eye. The site could be hosted by a non-profit organization, a university, a foundation, a regional organization, or by an international organization like the United Nations.
- **Strengthen legal instruments at both the international and national levels, providing victims of terrorism with legal status and protecting their rights.** At the national level, Member States should consider adopting legislation that provides victims of terrorism with legal status and protects their legal rights. Furthermore, they could establish ad hoc structures such as independent panels or commissions of inquiry to complement national investigative work on terrorist cases; ensure that Government and independent inquiries share their findings regularly and in a timely fashion with all the concerned victims of terrorist attacks; and facilitate the participation of victims and/or representatives of victims associations in legal proceedings against the perpetrators of terrorist acts.





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At the international level, Member States should take steps to adopt the comprehensive United Nations convention on terrorism and consider including language that provides victims with an international legal status and calls for the protection of their rights as victims of terrorism. An alternative option would be to include this language in a specific United Nations declaration on rights of victims of terrorism. In addition, terrorism could be included among crimes under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. Finally, Member States should use existing regional and international bodies for improving police and judicial cooperation across international borders in order to bring perpetrators of terrorist acts to justice.

- **Establish easily accessible health services that can provide victims with comprehensive support over the short, medium and long term.** Relevant Government ministries within Member States should work with health professionals and civil society to institutionalize assistance to victims. This would include establishing mechanisms that would provide information as well as psychological and physical treatment and support to victims over the short, medium and long term, preferably following a free of charge one-stop-shop-model. It would also include establishing programmes that would provide all professionals working with victims specialized training for dealing with victims of traumatic events.
- **Create an international rapid response team for victims' support.** An international group of relevant experts and victims of previous attacks, ready to volunteer and provide assistance to victims in the event of a terrorist attack, could be established.

- **Provide financial support to victims.** Two main key ideas were put forward for consideration. At the national level, Member States could develop comprehensive support packages to victims of terrorism. These would need to be governed by fair and transparent compensation policies. At the international level, a voluntary fund for financial support to victims of terrorism could be established and administered by an international non-governmental organization, an international foundation or the United Nations.
- **Improve the capacity of the United Nations to assist survivors and families of staff killed or injured in terrorist attacks against it.** The United Nations should lead by example and should review and improve its own policies and procedures supporting victims.
- **Engage in a global awareness campaign supporting victims of terrorism.** Future symposia, events and activities could be held in support of victims at the international, regional and national levels as a way to build on the momentum created by the Secretary-General's initiative. Furthermore, the international community, regional organizations and Governments could raise awareness for the needs of victims through adopting an International Day Commemorating Victims of Terrorism to foster solidarity and mobilize international public opinion against extremist violence and terrorism.
- **Improve media coverage of victims of terrorism.** Journalists should receive training on phenomena like shock, trauma and post-traumatic stress to assist them in responding in both a professional and humane way. This would significantly improve the quality of media coverage of victims in general and victims of terrorism in particular. Furthermore, media at both national and international levels could organize campaigns to raise awareness of the stories, needs and concerns of victims of terrorism through media messages such as public service announcements, special programmes, documentaries, movies, reports and articles.



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