



**RESPONDING TO A
TERROR ATTACK
A STRONG CITIES TOOLKIT**

About this toolkit

This Strong Cities Network (SCN) toolkit offers a guide for local governments in formulating a sensitive and effective response in the wake of a terror attack.

The motive behind an act of terror is not just to inflict violence, but to create societal fear and division. In the immediate aftermath of a terror attack, national authorities take the lead in emergency responses, reinforcing public safety and launching criminal investigations. However, as the days, weeks and months progress, the impact of a terror attack can run deep, causing untold social consequences across communities and across geographic borders. Communities, no matter how resilient, require strong local leadership to help them heal and recover.

Mayors and locally elected officials have a critical role to play in stabilising, reassuring and tackling social division in the aftermath of an attack. In the past decade, terrorist methods have evolved from the pursuit of 'hard' targets symbolising the state and its institutions, to an increased focus on 'soft targets'.¹ The Global Terrorism Index 2020 highlights that '[e]ven in conflict situations, civilians are most likely to be terrorist targets'. While total global deaths from terrorism fell for the fifth consecutive year since their height in 2014, the surge in far-right political terrorism over the last five years depicts a worrying trend in broadening the reach of terrorism, especially in increasingly polarised societies.²

The impact of terrorism on urban centres has never been greater. Violent extremist groups encourage small-scale attacks that target civilians where they are most vulnerable as 'soft targets', from crowded places to faith institutions, making cities ideal battlegrounds. Between 1993 and 2000, the number of terrorist attacks in cities more than doubled.³ Were it available, more recent data would likely paint a bleaker picture. With this shift come increasing pressures on public institutions to establish clear roles and protocols for responding to attacks and planning ways to mitigate impact for their constituents.

With the development of this toolkit, we offer mayors, their cabinets and city officials a framework to develop and deliver activities in the wake of such an event in a way that complements, rather than duplicates, national government action. The toolkit draws on a series of interviews with city members from across the 140+ SCN membership, desk-based research and the expertise of the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) in addressing hate, polarisation and extremism at the local level.

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Contents

Introduction —

Background	1
Rising challenges	1
The role of local authorities	2
Toolkit overview	2

Chapter 2 — Public Communications

Introduction	8
Situation analysis	9
Response	11
- Part 1: Messaging	11
- Part 2: Dissemination	14
- Part 3: Monitoring	15

Chapter 4 — Leadership Response

Introduction	24
Situation analysis	25
Response	25
- General framework	25
- Communications	26

Annexes —

Annex 1: Worksheets	32
Annex 2: Additional resources	38

Chapter 1 — Community Engagement

Introduction	3
Situation analysis	4
- Identifying vulnerable communities	4
- Identifying entry points	5
Response	6
- Outreach	6

Chapter 3 — Psychological Support

Introduction	16
Situation analysis	18
Response	20

Conclusion — How To Prepare?

Developing plans	29
Mapping exercises	30
Building partnerships	30

Introduction

Background

Terrorists have targeted cities for centuries. Over the past decades, actors carrying out terror campaigns have shifted from perpetrating murder or the disappearance of political opponents to instilling societal-wide change through fear, with cities serving as the ideal backdrop for mass casualties and symbolic attacks.⁴ Cities have expanding populations in densely packed vicinities, allowing terrorists to inflict high rates of casualties while inducing mass psychological trauma. Moreover, cities remain potent symbols of political, economic and cultural power in their own right, as well as nerve centres for vital infrastructure networks including communications, transport and energy. An attack on a city provokes widespread media coverage, ensuring that the trauma is felt far beyond the city boundaries and generating coverage for terrorists.

With the advent of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), timers and remote detonators, the number and variety of targets vulnerable to attacks has increased, yielding greater potential for destruction and a higher chance of success. As technology and 'crowd-sourcing' is more ubiquitous, demand for specialised training and knowledge lessens, allowing terrorist groups or individuals to cause harm well beyond their means. A co-ordinated series of attacks can therefore strike a powerful blow to authorities, both local and national, while accomplishing a number of other goals, such as: generating fear, exposing or strengthening social division, providing a political distraction, eroding trust in institutions, damaging a city's prestige or economy, and/or creating publicity for the perpetrator(s).

With an estimated 68% of the world's population due to live in urban areas by 2050, cities' value as targets for international terrorism will only increase as the size, population and influence of these areas grows.⁵ In parallel, counter-measures designed to prevent such acts must evolve to keep pace with the shifting kaleidoscope of threats.

Rising Challenges

If terrorist groups were formerly preoccupied with 'hard targets' such as government buildings and security forces, the goal now appears to centre on 'soft targets', paralysing urban centres, halting daily life and creating widespread panic.⁶ To this end, groups have employed novel, low-technology means to maximise the impact of their attacks, including the use of vehicles, knives and IEDs – weapons which are relatively inexpensive and easy to build, while being very difficult to prevent.⁷

Developments in communications technology have allowed attackers to convene, organise and expand their reach both within and across borders with greater impunity. Improved facilitation is evident in many recent cases of marauding attacks,⁸ including the 2009 Mumbai attacks. In that instance, smartphones and social media enabled the perpetrators to co-ordinate their movements effectively, as well as receive guidance and real-time logistical support from their offsite handlers in Pakistan.⁹ A recent trend has been the use of online platforms to showcase acts of terror on a large scale: in 2019 the Christchurch attacker livestreamed the killing of 51 Muslim civilians through a gamified, first-person perspective on Facebook, aiming to reach a specific audience heavily engaged with internet subcultures.¹⁰ Following the Christchurch atrocity, the 'Islamic State' (IS) requested its followers to seek revenge, illustrating how attacks serve as a potent trigger for reciprocal radicalisation and action.

Likewise, potential attackers are more difficult to identify, as threats decentralise from proscribed 'terrorist groups' with organisational structures to those radicalised by the broader ideology of movements without centralised leadership and direction. Around 60% of terror attacks are now carried out by individuals (often termed 'lone actors') who are unaffiliated with any terrorist organisation.¹¹ In short, there is a growing conviction that anyone can carry out an attack, anyone may be a victim and any urban setting is a potential future target.

The Role of Local Authorities

Taken together, these trends represent a new challenge in the fight against modern urban terrorism. Moreover, a 'local turn' towards greater municipal devolution must necessitate greater scrutiny of city-level policies and practices. This in turn makes the role of local authorities and elected officials in post-incident response increasingly pertinent.

However, this role is often unclear – agreeing on roles and responsibilities between and across the various levels of government in times of peace and calm is critical. Whereas historically cities have been outranked and left aside by national authorities in the immediate aftermath of a terrorist attack, city leaders today must take responsibility for a number of areas. These include co-ordinating local actors, liaising with media, addressing the psychosocial needs of victims, preventing reactionary or escalated violence, and rallying communities to build resilience against extremism.¹² The latter is particularly relevant in an increasingly polarised climate in which terrorism influences electoral outcomes and democratic institutions. A study conducted in Turkey demonstrated that right-wing parties, which are traditionally 'less concessionist toward the terrorist organization's cause compared to [that of] their left-wing counterparts', gain voters' shares based on the population's exposure to terrorism.¹³ A poll shows that following the October 2020 terrorist attacks in France, the public was more inclined to trust far-right politician Marine Le Pen over President Emmanuel Macron when fighting terrorism.¹⁴ Engaging on the ground through local actors can help address valid concerns and ensure that individuals do not resort to responses that might be intolerant or undemocratic.

Toolkit Overview

This toolkit seeks to fill a gap in resources for mayors and local authorities who may find themselves on the frontline following a terrorist attack. While many manuals and guides exist for post-incident crisis management, they often fall short in several areas. First, they tend to focus on strategic communications and co-ordination, without considering local responses that both benefit and engage key stakeholders such as local media, victims and families, social services and the wider community.¹⁵ As a result, tools and methods to communicate with these stakeholders remain vague. Second, crisis management guidance generally draws on Western case studies, which may not be relevant for a global audience.¹⁶ Lastly, numerous resources have been developed over the past years on soft target protection, leaving a gap in the long-term impact and collective trauma of affected communities.¹⁷

The SCN has approached these issues with a fresh perspective, providing a blueprint for city leaders and local authorities who look to reassure citizens and inspire trust during times of perceived insecurity, instability and trauma. The **first chapter focuses on community engagement**, setting out how authorities can leverage existing networks to determine the impact of an attack, identify the most appropriate victim support mechanisms, and promote social cohesion for the community at large. The **second chapter focuses on communications** and seeks to guide local authorities in developing outreach plans that de-escalate any rising tensions and strengthen a city's sense of identity, morale and cohesion. The **third chapter** provides an overview of how cities can ensure their communities benefit from **appropriate psychosocial support**. The **fourth chapter provides a summary of key considerations** to guide city leaders in the immediate aftermath of an attack, when tensions are at their highest. Finally, **worksheets, further tools and resources** in the two annexes can be used to support this work and monitor social media platforms, which can be a powerful tool to inform all aspects of the city's response.

The role of cities in responding to terrorist incidents should not be underestimated. The duty to engage multiple actors, while also reassuring communities and setting an example of strength and unity, may be daunting, but is vital if cities are to remain resilient in the face of attacks. This toolkit has been informed by a global network of mayors, policymakers and practitioners who have contributed their time and expertise to provide a well-rounded, informed and versatile toolkit. We hope it can serve as a roadmap for local authorities in establishing their own strategy.

Chapter 1

Community Engagement

Introduction

Community engagement is key to a participatory governance approach, which is increasingly recognised as best practice at all levels of government.¹⁸ Most local authorities already engage in their communities in a variety of ways and recognise its importance.¹⁹ Nonetheless, they need to be aware of the acutely sensitive and emotionally charged context in which they will be operating after an attack. Following the Easter bombings in Sri Lanka in 2019 claimed by IS, several attacks took place against Muslim-owned businesses and houses, and there were calls to boycott Muslim-owned shops.²⁰ This example shows how quickly communities perceived to be associated with the perpetrator(s) can become demonised, and the need for local authorities to engage actively with all communities to avoid further escalation and damage to a city's social fabric.

This chapter provides guidance on how to use long-term community engagement strategies and partnerships following a terrorist attack. Building trust and dialogue with communities as part of a long-term strategy is key to ensuring that local authorities can engage with them effectively if an attack happens. Conversely, engaging communities as a 'one-off' following an attack can lead to them being stigmatised or reinforce negative perceptions. Through long-term engagement, local authorities will be able to:

- *Disseminate information and guidance in a tailored and effective way*
- *Identify community needs, existing resources and the support available (e.g. volunteer networks and informal information-sharing mechanisms)*
- *Identify appropriate victim support mechanisms.*

Situation Analysis

Identifying vulnerable communities

The first step after an attack is to conduct a thorough mapping exercise. Local authorities should identify communities that might be especially vulnerable following the attack and therefore need dedicated measures.

Mapping out Communities	
<p>Communities targeted by the terrorist attack.</p>	<p>The Pittsburgh synagogue attack in 2018 led to concerns about the general safety of Jewish communities, both real and perceived. The city has therefore been engaging with these communities to identify means of support, for example by providing additional security for places of worship on Jewish holidays.</p>
<p>Communities perceived to be related to the perpetrator(s). Being linked to the perpetrator(s) in any way may lead to blame, revenge attacks and self-stigmatisation.</p>	<p>There is increasing evidence that terrorist attacks can cause spikes in hate crime and lead to ethnic tensions, indicating growing intolerance against individuals or communities perceived to be linked to the events. Aside from the direct harm caused by this reciprocal violence, it can have long-term effects on community cohesion. The province of Xinjiang in China, home to the Turkic, predominantly Muslim, Uighur population, illustrates this phenomenon well. Following a series of attacks by separatists and extremists across China, including by Uighurs, the Chinese government has focused its counter-terrorism efforts in Xinjiang. Alongside controversial policies, communal tensions between Uighurs and Hans – who represent 45% and 40% of the Xinjiang population respectively – have been rising over the past 15 years, leading to violent riots and incidents on numerous occasions.²¹</p>
<p>Communities affected collaterally by the terrorist attack, whether physically and/or psychologically (e.g. their assets were destroyed, a similar event happened before with a different target).</p>	<p>These communities could be individuals whose personal assets or homes are destroyed, and who will need both temporary shelter and post-traumatic care. Terrorist attacks may also have indirect victims. For example, social media coverage of such events can be overwhelming for a person's nervous system and create traumatic stress just as if they had experienced the event first-hand.²²</p>
<p>Communities that are at risk of (further) radicalisation, either because they follow the ideology of the perpetrator(s), or they stand at the receiving end of the attack. In either case, they might feel that the use of violence becomes legitimised.</p>	<p>Extremist and terrorist networks capitalised on the Christchurch shooting in 2019 across the extremist spectrum. Following the attack, IS made an official statement calling for revenge by the Muslim community.²³ At the same time, the Facebook livestream recorded by the shooter circulated on far-right extremist channels and served to further radicalise that community, including the perpetrator of the El Paso shooting that took place a few months later.²⁴</p>

Identifying entry points

Local authorities should adopt a **mixed approach**, in which they conduct direct community engagement, and work through partners who already have trust and credibility on the ground. They should assess the **advantages, opportunities, risks and challenges** of direct versus indirect engagement (these may vary depending on the target audience) to decide where to place emphasis.

	Who?	What?
Direct Engagement	<p>Assign an internal case manager who is perceived as a trusted point of contact within the community. This could be a community engagement officer, a social worker, a local or community police officer, etc.</p>	<p>In addition to the usual qualities required to engage with communities (being empathetic, practical, trustworthy, non-judgemental), the individual needs to have a thorough understanding of the community dynamics and structures, and be as open-minded as possible.²⁵ Providing resources and training on unconscious bias, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and conflict resolution can be important to address this in a structured manner.</p>
Indirect Engagement	<p>Community actors can have various backgrounds, e.g. be community organisers, local council members and other government leaders, non-profit or business leaders, volunteer or faith leaders, and long-term residents. Some of these actors have the ability to engage with and influence multiple spaces, including domestic, professional, social and cultural.</p>	<p>These actors can provide an informed frontline understanding of their communities and help identify existing structures and relationships including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Activities in which the community is already interested and involved and where community engagement might be integrated. * Social, economic and political structures that can be used for community engagement. * Changing needs and concerns.

Protection of churches by Muslim youth: a case study of solidarity among religious communities in Jordan

After IS attacked churches in Egypt, and amid the group’s repeated threats to Jordanian security, young Muslims in Jordan took the initiative to guard churches across the country during Easter celebrations in an attempt ‘to ensure the safety of Christians inside’.²⁶

Response

Outreach

Key Principles	Building trust and dialogue through transparent communications and detailed planning.
Communicating Objectives	<p>Explain the purpose of your engagement. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Gauging the impact of this incident on different segments of the community</i> * <i>Identifying the needs of the community in the short, medium and long term</i> * <i>Assessing community skills and expertise and people's appetite to support wider post-incident response</i> * <i>Developing a recovery plan for the community</i> * <i>Disseminating information and soliciting ongoing feedback on the response.</i> <hr/> <p><i>Outline a clear plan on how you intend to sustain engagement and how contributions of community members will be used (address potential data privacy issues and anonymity guarantees if community members speak to you in confidence about their concerns, things they have seen online, worrying trends, etc.).</i></p>
Methods	<p>Go to the communities: knock on people's doors, or meet them 'on their own turf' – identify where people congregate. The case manager should be accompanied by a trusted and credible community actor.</p> <hr/> <p>Organise public meetings and open houses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Enable the public to lead in identifying priorities, organising support, implementing programmes and evaluating outcomes. Empower them to draw on their full potential in developing collective actions and solutions. The local authority should act as a co-ordinator, rather than issuing instructions.</i> * <i>Provide a space for people to meet and connect, but also to raise legitimate concerns so that any challenges and disagreements can be addressed. This builds a culture of shared responsibility and openness, rather than shaming people for being afraid, angry, etc. It is vital that such sessions are facilitated by someone with a background in mediation or high-stakes situations, as emotions may run high and require a confident, calm 'referee' to keep things on track.</i>

Methods

Establish a **working group** of different community actors from across your city, who can convene as needed to share updates, troubleshoot issues and adjust the strategy or next steps accordingly. Ensure this group represents the diversity of your local population, across various common divides (e.g. gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation).

Media: online channels can remove barriers for outreach (e.g. travel costs, audience size) and allow for a continuous flow of information, networking and consultation (e.g. Facebook lives, Twitter, WhatsApp). That said, many sections of the population may not be active or comfortable with social media (e.g. older citizens), or have limited access to the internet and therefore prefer more traditional media like radio, local news or print. For the latter, you may be able to negotiate in-kind support through regular segments, column inches, etc. It is best to use a variety of channels to reach the widest possible audience – do not assume a Facebook post will have universal reach.

Surveys can be a quick and easy way to gather information, especially when conducted online. However, be sure to 'clean' the data and check for anything that looks suspicious or anomalous.²⁷

Municipalities to the far north of Cameroon: a case study in community strength (SCN interview with a municipal official, 2018)

In the face of multiple attacks by terrorist group Boko Haram, municipalities had to organise themselves and co-operate to protect their communities. Active collaboration between local populations and defence forces led to the creation of 'vigilance committees', with volunteers forming groups to guard the villages. Municipalities organised equipment for these committees, who among other tasks now report any concerning updates to the mayor so they can alert and/or escalate to the relevant security forces. While this is a great example of community mobilisation, such committees bear the risk of turning to vigilantism. Local and national leaders, law enforcement and local communities need to set a clear mandate for these groups and maintain close oversight to reduce the likelihood of a counter-insurgency. Additionally, these committees seem to work best when the political interests of central and local authorities are aligned, which requires constant communication and co-ordination.²⁸

Chapter 2

Public Communications

Introduction

Terrorist attacks make headlines, both domestically and abroad, and quickly become a subject of debate beyond the location affected and for an extensive period of time after the incident. It is therefore critical that local authorities have a strong communications plan and protocols.²⁹ For example, public servants will need guidance and information on how to adapt their services in any particular circumstances, remaining calm and united in their public engagements despite the surrounding chaos.³⁰ While national agencies will take responsibility for the security response to a terror attack, local authorities have unique access to their constituents and should therefore play a central role in de-escalating any rising tensions and maintaining unity across their city. Getting this approach right is a source of anxiety for local authorities as they will likely contend with increased national and local scrutiny. It is important to note that while people tend to be 'fairly resilient, calm and rationale' in the immediate aftermath, in 'the days and weeks following the attacks, the targeted populace tends to change their behaviours and attitudes in accordance with their perceived risk perceptions'.³¹ To ensure that local authorities shape these reactions and retain the trust and legitimacy of their residents and national authorities, they must follow a comprehensive communication framework.

This chapter outlines considerations for local authorities in their communications effort, both in the days following an attack and beyond: what are specific needs at this time, how should messaging be constructed and what are the best channels for dissemination? The objective is to integrate crisis communications into an existing communications strategy, as outlined in Annex 2.

Situation Analysis

The situation analysis will inform the content, format and dissemination of your communications as you:

- **Build** a more complete picture of the attack and crisis response
- **Listen** to the general narratives circulating and the key actors involved
- **Identify** the various segments of your audience and how to communicate with them.

<p>Step 1: Context Analysis</p>	<p>Gain a comprehensive understanding of the event and the crisis response and be prepared to address misinformation, disinformation and hate narratives.³² This will help you gather the content of your communications, as well as pre-empt any questions and concerns that you will be asked to comment on.</p>	
<p>Step 2: Mapping Internal Capabilities</p>	<p>Staff and responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Public spokespeople</i> * <i>Senior communications official (ideally someone proximate to the mayor or an elected leader)</i> * <i>Communications staff in charge of different channels</i> * <i>Community engagement staff</i> * <i>Frontline services (education, health, etc.)</i> * <i>Stakeholder manager or focal point to work between agencies nationally and locally.</i> 	<p>Staff and responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Official website</i> * <i>Public social media accounts</i> * <i>Public hotline</i> * <i>Citizen contact database (for outreach via physical mail or email)</i> * <i>Local media (TV, radio, newspapers)</i> * <i>Access to religious and public institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.)</i> * <i>Internal communications channels and with other agencies, e.g. police, education sector, health institutions.</i>
<p>Step 3: Stakeholder Mapping</p>	<p>Gain a comprehensive understanding of reactions to the terrorist attack. This should begin as quickly as possible (e.g. the day after a terrorist attack). Stakeholder mapping will help you assess who else is occupying the information landscape, officially or informally, the audiences they are reaching and what content to address. For example, are there misinformation, disinformation or conspiracy theories circulating about the attack? If there are, who is most vulnerable or susceptible to them and who is best placed to influence them? Are there accusations directed at the local authorities or crisis response teams more generally? Are they justified or should you provide additional facts? What can you do to stem leaks that may inflame tensions?</p>	



The content of the local authority’s messaging, as well as the regularity and mode of communication, will differ **depending on the target audience**. For example, there is value in having a dedicated case manager for victims who can be on call as needed, while media receive information via official statements or briefings from delegated spokespeople. Decisions on how to communicate with various audiences should be based on a full stakeholder analysis (see [Annex 1, page 34](#)).



Partners are important to ensure that local authorities convey their messages in an appropriate format and through relevant channels. Posting on official channels is rarely enough as it requires citizens to have existing knowledge of those channels and visit them regularly. This is true for social media for example, where a mayor’s Twitter account or the municipal police Facebook page posts useful information. While it is worth generating as many followers of such accounts as possible during times of calm, it is most likely that these accounts will always have limited reach. Instead, you should strive to **take information to people wherever possible**, while still promoting or directing them towards verified sources. Ideally, such partners would be part of two-way communication with the local authority – helping not only to disseminate key messages and updates, but also to provide insight on how specific groups receive the attack and any emerging harmful trends (e.g. misinformation and disinformation).

Following the September 2013 siege in Zamboanga, Philippines, religious leaders were vital advisers and intermediaries for the internally displaced community. Moreover, as there were at least three local languages and many dialects spoken within that community, the city government partnered with a consultant on Muslim affairs, who provided guidance and translation support.



Monitoring conversations around the attack on **social media** can inform the situation analysis and provide further information on:

- Questions and concerns raised by the population that can be addressed by the local authority, e.g. protection and security measures
- Misinformation and disinformation that need to be addressed, e.g. background of the perpetrator
- Ad hoc community initiatives that would be worth promoting, e.g. [#PorteOuverte initiative](#) during the Paris attacks in 2015.

See [Annex 2](#) for free and basic resources and tools to monitor social media.

Response

Part 1: Messaging

Communications following a terrorist attack should aim to:

- *Ensure there is a continuous flow of information between authorities and the public*
- *Establish trust and transparency in the post-incident response*
- *Foster solidarity and social cohesion within the community*

Informing		Cross Cutting Principles
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Provide objective facts, not speculation * Provide clear guidance for citizen safety * Establish a schedule for the response and a lead person or entity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Transparency * Integrity * Honesty * Empathy
Tips	<p>Provide regular updates. If there is nothing new to say, explain the situation and provide an update on what you are doing. Silence will only breed confusion and hearsay.</p> <hr/> <p>Only share facts from trusted sources and address any misinformation or disinformation directly. It is better to tackle rumours head-on, exposing them as false or misguided, than allow conspiracies to spread unchecked. That said, you do not want to give fuel to stories which would have limited visibility otherwise – this is sometimes known as the ‘trumpet of amplification’,³³ a key tactic for those wishing to channel falsehoods into the mainstream. It is therefore vital to have accurate monitoring of social media (see Annex 2 for resources and tools), and trusted intermediaries who can feed back on the substance of discussions in the community (e.g. major employers; health, youth and social workers; faith leaders; sports coaches). This will help you determine when harmful information has crossed a ‘critical mass’ of exposure (and therefore needs to be addressed), or whether it remains in the fringe but should be monitored for future spread.</p> <hr/> <p>Provide guidance, including on what sources to trust and existing support mechanisms. If misinformation and disinformation is a major risk, consider launching an ‘amnesty line’ for people to report (anonymously) any harmful content they have seen and the respective source. This will help to overcome the limitations of monitoring, since viral content may spread on encrypted platforms (e.g. WhatsApp) or those difficult to track with standard ‘social listening’ tools (e.g. TikTok, YouTube).</p>	

Uniting		Cross Cutting Principles
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Keep messaging apolitical * Beware of unintended glorification * Use language that promotes unity and tolerance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Transparency * Integrity * Honesty * Empathy
Tips	<p>Vocabulary used to describe the attack or its perpetrator(s) should be carefully selected. For example, local authorities should be conscious that labelling something a 'terrorist attack' will have associations and consequences. Terrorism is a specific tactic with particular motives and objectives, and the term should not be used to quantify how seriously you take a situation. According to Tarik Kafala, Head of BBC Arabic at the time of the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, 'The value judgements frequently implicit in the use of the words "terrorist" or "terrorist group" can create inconsistency in their use or, to audiences, raise doubts about... impartiality. It may be better to talk about an apparent act of terror or terrorism than label individuals or a group.'³⁴</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted #000;"/> <p>It is equally important to be very cautious about amplifying a terrorist message or creating a 'cult of personality' or martyrdom around the perpetrator(s). For example, many news outlets pointed to the so-called 'manifesto' published by the perpetrator of the 2019 Christchurch mosque shootings. This document is believed to have subsequently inspired copycat attacks that took place in the US and Europe a few months later.³⁵</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted #000;"/> <p>Political officials and local authorities need to show a united front and adopt a common, ideologically neutral message. This will mitigate the risk of ripple effects from the attack, including attempts to avenge victims through violence or to harass or commit hate crimes against individuals who may share the perpetrator's background (e.g. ethnic, faith and migrant status) or are perceived to support their cause. As an example, following the 2015 Kumanovo clashes, council members gathered to agree their common message, which focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Unanimously condemning the event</i> * <i>Asking the population to follow government advice</i> * <i>Promoting solidarity beyond ethnic and religious backgrounds.</i> 	

Reacting		Cross Cutting Principles
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Inform instead of denying, justifying or shifting blame * Beware of timing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Transparency * Integrity * Honesty * Empathy
Tips	<p>Be candid about any mistakes and explain how you are rectifying them, without getting into unnecessary debates or defensive positions. The public tends to have strong negative reactions to blame shifting, and it will do little to help establish trust. For example, the UK Prime Minister Johnson was heavily criticised following the London Bridge knife attack in November 2019 for blaming the opposition party instead of admitting shortcomings from his government, and outlining clear next steps to address the situation. Despite negative comments on his initial reaction, Johnson maintained his stance, which led to accusations of furthering ‘an agenda of hate’ from a parent of one of the victims, and a wider loss of public support.³⁶</p> <hr style="border-top: 1px dotted #000;"/> <p>While communications in the immediate aftermath of an attack should focus on essential updates, expressions of empathy or solidarity and security protocols, equally important discussions on root causes, consequences, liability, public inquiries, restorative justice and long-term response should wait for the mourning phase to pass. This is also true for reactions to specific attacks or accusations of blame. While targeted communications can be used to de-escalate a situation and provide facts, the audience needs to have processed the events to be able to receive such communications positively.</p>	

Case study: Prime Minister Ardern’s communications following the 2019 Christchurch shooting

— **Resist war rhetoric:** Ardern’s statements focused on the [New Zealand population and communities affected](#), giving almost no platform to the perpetrator himself. This stands in contrast to other incidents, where the official response has been more militaristic or reactionary and therefore heightened feelings of fear and antagonism in the general public. It is important to recognise the profound sense of violation and anger people experience after an attack, but this should not be made worse by officials making inflammatory statements (e.g. those boasting of government retaliation through warfare or crackdowns on civil liberties).

Case study: Prime Minister Ardern's communications following the 2019 Christchurch shooting

- **Avoid saying the perpetrator's name:** Ardern made a point of referring to the shooter in the abstract, to avoid glorifying him or creating a sense of martyrdom in his actions. While the primary aim was to avoid rewarding him with notoriety, which many attackers long for (especially those radicalised and operating online), this strategy also avoided creating an 'us' versus 'them' narrative.
- **Unite people through a global call to action:** while admitting that white nationalism is a growing issue in New Zealand (even though the perpetrator was in fact an Australian citizen), Ardern encouraged all nations to respond and create an environment where such ideologies cannot flourish. Through initiatives like [the Christchurch Call](#), she 'succeeded in othering the terrorist, but not by treating him as an emissary from a hostile outside world; indeed, she [...] succeeded in describing the tragedy in both national and global terms'.³⁷

Part 2: Dissemination

Considerations	Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Language: do you need to translate your materials or use an interpreter for live events?</i> * <i>Culture: is it more appropriate to communicate in person or to use less direct channels or social media?</i> * <i>Literacy: is it more appropriate to record messages or use visuals rather than provide written statements?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * <i>Financial: available budget</i> * <i>Human: staff and partners</i> * <i>In kind: venue to host press conference, website to host information, public figures and 'credible messengers' to convey key messages to the public.</i>



Hold roundtable talks with journalists to raise awareness in a collaborative setting (rather than a press conference). This can serve as an opportunity to outline what the local authority is doing, what messaging is helpful, what misinformation and disinformation they should be aware of, and to promote a 'do no harm' approach when liaising with victims, such as protecting names of victims. See [Annex 2](#) for resources, including a UNESCO handbook for journalists to consult to learn more about reporting terrorist incidents.



Terrorist attacks will raise a number of questions and concerns among children and young people. It is important to ensure that teachers are equipped to facilitate an informed and productive discussion in the classroom. See [Annex 2](#) for resources.



Consider using social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube to reach younger audiences (or partnering with young activists and influencers to disseminate your messaging), as well as promoting a unique hashtag to direct people to relevant information.

Part 3: Monitoring

Monitoring the response and reactions to your communications and the narratives around the incident is central and should inform subsequent communications. This should be done through continuous community engagement and social media monitoring. [Annex 2](#) provides tools and resources to monitor your own channels, and other platforms if appropriate.

Chapter 3

Psychosocial Support

Introduction

While the experiences of those who have survived terrorist acts are deeply personal and context-specific, research has uncovered common layers of trauma among both victims and witnesses. These span from physical and medical effects to intrusive, lasting psychological trauma.³⁸ For example, a study of victims of terrorism in Israel found that 77% displayed symptoms of traumatic stress, while 59% showed signs of depression. The study also found that proximity to an attack was not always a key factor to determine the psychological impact on an individual, with witnesses just as likely to experience trauma as those who were directly targeted by attackers or experienced physical injuries.³⁹ Likewise, five years after the 1995 Sarin gas attacks in Tokyo, Japan, victims continued to present 'unexplained physical symptoms' likely resulting from post-traumatic stress disorder.⁴⁰ In addition to individual impact, affected societies often suffer from 'collective trauma', manifesting as a shared feeling of 'imminent pervasive threat, fear, terror, and inhibition,... a state of generalised insecurity, terror, lack of confidence, and rupture of the social fabric'.⁴¹ These feelings of anxiety are especially acute in cases where a particular ethnic or religious community is targeted by attackers, ostensibly separating them from the rest of the population.

In the aftermath of an attack, fear has long-lasting implications on public health, safety and the economy. It is therefore central that all individuals impacted can access psychosocial support. While local authorities should not necessarily develop or oversee such mechanisms themselves, they have the necessary reach, resources and credibility to co-ordinate relevant actors, one of the most important (and challenging) tasks in emergency situations.⁴² This chapter outlines the various steps local authorities should undertake to build a co-ordination mechanism to provide tailored and comprehensive psychosocial support to the local population following a terrorist attack.

Situation Analysis

Local authorities usually have a good understanding of the various actors operating on the ground (e.g. social services, counsellors, mentoring initiatives, extra-curricular clubs, non-formal education). Nonetheless, there may be resources and providers that are particularly grassroots, less well known to officials, or likely to be overlooked when there is an emergency. Local authorities may therefore find it helpful to establish a **local psychosocial support working group**, open to all service providers and supporting actors. Ideally, the local authority would assemble this group as a prevention effort and mobilise it in an emergency such as a terrorist attack, a natural disaster or a health crisis.

1

Administrative set up of the working group

- ① Assign an employee (or more, depending on needs) from the local authority as focal point(s) for partners and to administer the working group (e.g. maintaining related documents and databases, organising and leading meetings, liaising with partners).
- ② Secure a space for the working group's meetings and determine their recurrence.
- ③ Start collating the necessary documents, including:
 - **Terms of reference** that set out 'membership' criteria, principles to abide by (e.g. 'do no harm'), roles and responsibilities (including of actors outside the working group such as national agencies and the police), meeting guidelines, ways of working, etc.
 - **A database of service providers and supporting actors** including their main target audience or beneficiaries, the areas of support, their geographic reach, their method and the languages spoken (e.g. hotline, in-person counselling, social activities, group support circles)
 - **A database of beneficiaries** not necessarily including names and contact details, but rather various groups that might need psychosocial support (e.g. parents of victims in neighbourhood X); this will feed into a matrix that cross-checks that all groups needing support are covered by a service provider or support actor
 - **Evaluation log** to continuously review the support available and challenges experienced by service users in order to improve provision. This review should take place at the regular meeting, where you can gather feedback from the various members of the working groups on demand for services, capacity and resource issues, equal access and so on. For example: is suitable support available across the city? Are there any individuals who need support but are not currently receiving it? Are services adapting to the cycle of trauma?

2

Identify service providers and other support actors who could form part of the working group

- ① Organise an **open meeting** for all stakeholders who can provide a frontline service or support people in need of psychosocial support in other ways (e.g. providing meals, keeping them company, contacting relatives, running errands). In larger cities, various meetings should be organised in different neighbourhoods to ensure the local authorities are aware of all potential partners.
- ② **Reach out directly** to partners the local authorities are already aware of.
- ③ Use **community engagement** activities to identify other potential partners.
- ④ Set up a regular town hall for official partners and anyone willing to volunteer their time or expertise.

While **volunteering** can be an essential resource in times of crisis, it is vital to maintain standards in line with duty of care. For example, **someone with no formal training should never be responsible for trauma counselling; equally, someone lacking the necessary background checks (e.g. a Disclosure and Barring Certificate in the UK) cannot be assigned to work with minors or vulnerable adults.** It may seem excessive, but do not dodge these steps even if you are desperate for added capacity or people seem well-meaning. If anything goes wrong, it will be much harder to justify why a volunteer was given access to victims or placed in roles beyond their knowledge if you have not followed basic procedures.

Service providers and support actors can include families, community leaders, religious or traditional leaders and healers, community health and social workers, educators (formal and informal), women's groups, youth clubs, community planning groups, volunteer networks, local charities and businesses, etc., as long as they are given proper training.

3

Initial identification of beneficiaries

Identifying beneficiaries should start as soon as possible, and the list of names should be reviewed regularly at the working group meetings. The following groups can serve as a starting point to identify potential beneficiaries:

- **Direct victims and survivors:** those physically injured and other individuals present at the scene; a report on victim support following terrorist attacks in the UK argues that those 'who are ordinarily classified as "witnesses" who were in close proximity to the incident or at the scene shortly after should be considered and treated as survivors by all of the agencies involved in assisting victims, and be able to access adequate support services'⁴³
- **Next of kin:** families and other individuals close to the direct victims or survivors
- **Emergency services:** law enforcement officers, fire department and ambulance personnel and other first-line responders, who need to be educated about the potential long-term effects they might experience from such events
- **Secondary victims:** individuals and members of communities who relate to the victims (e.g. the Jewish community following the 2018 Pittsburgh attack)
- **Government employees:** staff within the local authority who may be in any of the categories above, especially those most closely involved in crisis management and response.⁴⁴

Nonetheless, support service providers should not be restrictive in who can have access, as terrorist attacks can have a mental health impact on individuals not directly affected by the violence. Following the 9/11 attacks, people as far as Denmark reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder related to the terrorist attack in New York.⁴⁵ In the early stages you may need to prioritise, so those in greatest need can access immediate care, but longer term you should aim to serve a wider constituency. Community outreach and engagement is a good avenue to identify additional people in need of psychosocial support.



Consider so-called 'cross border victims': for example, individuals who were visiting your city at the time of the terrorist attack. The International Network Supporting Victims of Terrorism and Mass Violence provides comprehensive guidelines to address their specific needs.⁴⁶



Consider diasporas: these are nationals living abroad or individuals living in your city whose hometown has been hit by a terrorist attack. These people will require information and potentially psychosocial support, and will have specific needs such as translation.



The working group should ensure it has professionals speaking different **languages**, to translate or interpret information and provide remote support.

Response**4****Needs and risks assessments**

Psychosocial support should be tailored to the needs and risks of each individual as much as possible. The local working group should collaborate to identify needs and conduct risk assessments, determining which care pathway is most appropriate in each case and who will take 'ownership' for that individual. The local authority can provide a joint framework to conduct and compile these assessments, as well as ensure regular updates from providers (in line with privacy restrictions and doctor–patient confidentiality). There are at least five dimensions related to wellbeing that should be included:

- **Psychological or social:** such needs can range from those requiring medical follow-up for syndromes such as post-traumatic stress disorder or depression to less severe issues linked to emotional wellbeing, where beneficiaries might need an external actor (e.g. a community support group) to help them cope.
- **Information and advice:** the aftermath of a terrorist attack will be very disorienting and overwhelming. Individuals might simply need advice on legal issues, how to deal with their employer or professional commitments, or how best to manage attention from media and journalists, and public visibility.
- **Physical health:** while this category could encompass mental health, we refer in particular to visible injuries, especially long-term ones, and the associated effect on self-perception or identity. Such injuries can be a persistent reminder of trauma, require significant changes to a person's lifestyle and capabilities, or make them identifiable in public.
- **Practical and safety:** practical problems, ranging from damage to property to difficulty in accessing a phone or accommodation, 'often act as reminders of what people have been through and make it harder to get their life back together'.⁴⁷ It is crucial to consider the digital aspects of addressing practical and safety concerns, and the potential for victims to become targets of hateful abuse, accusations, and misinformation and disinformation online (as, for example, took place for parents of children killed in the US Sandy Hook shooting).⁴⁸ Basic e-safety measures, such as limiting public access to social media accounts, should be introduced, and broad privacy guidance and advice given on reporting harmful content.
- **Financial:** there are various potential financial dimensions related to wellbeing after an attack, for example, direct victims and next of kin may suffer from financial difficulties due to funeral costs and lost wages, as well as damage to personal property.

It has become common practice for crowdfunding to take place for victims of terror attacks.⁴⁹ While such practices can be pivotal in ensuring that victims receive the appropriate level of support they need, decentralised crowdfunding efforts can equally be harmful. For example, following the Kenosha shooting in the US when two people were killed in August 2020, a crowdfunding site raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to pay for the legal defence of the perpetrator, accused of intentional homicide.⁵⁰ Such projects can potentially have a psychological impact on victims and their relatives, and become a vehicle to fuel further polarisation.⁵¹

5

Ensuring a comprehensive support package

Figure 1 shows an intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies, illustrating that a 'key to organising mental health and psychosocial support is to develop a layered system of complementary supports that meets the needs of different groups'.⁵² Through continuous collaboration and regular meetings, the local working group can identify what aspects of support are being addressed and by whom, and what gaps remain.

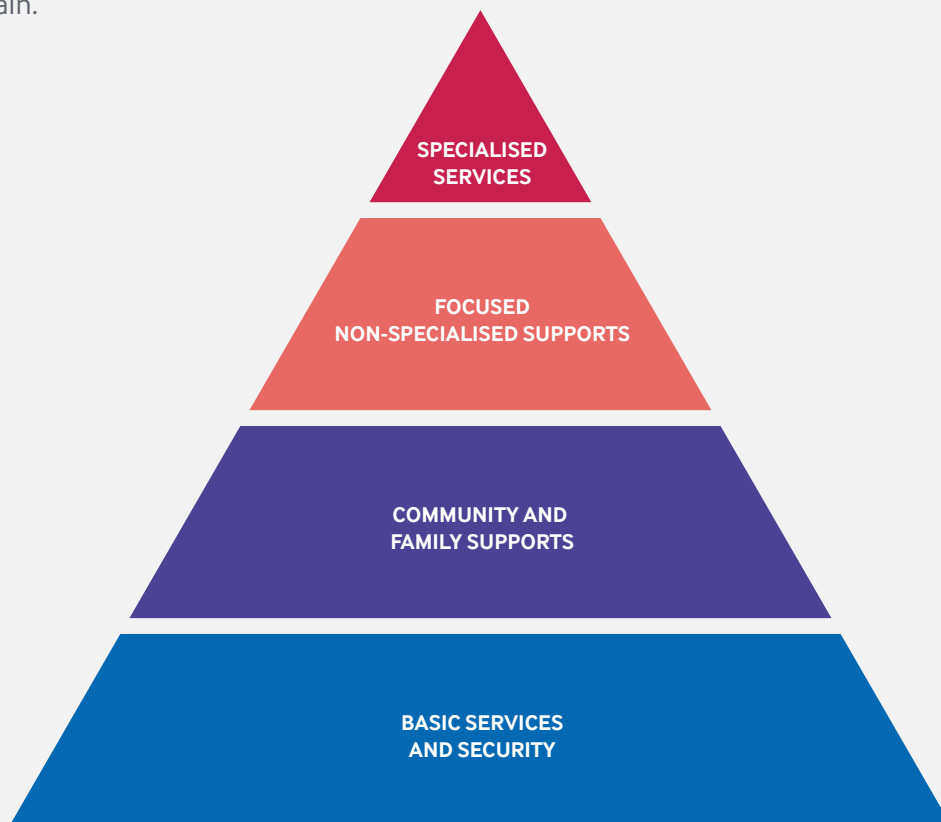


Figure 1: Intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies.⁵³

Mapping:

- ① Identify which working group actors are covering which needs, as per the risk assessment. This should be added to the database.
- ② Determine what other support mechanisms exist and which needs they are covering (e.g. national level compensation schemes).

5

Ensuring a comprehensive support package**Identify Gaps:**

- ① Using the mapping exercise, identify whether all needs from the assessments are being addressed through current service providers and support actors. If you identify specific gaps, explore whether you can organise training for community providers or grassroots groups to fill them.
- ② Revise your assessment continuously, using the regular meetings to evaluate the response and identify new trends or challenges.

Long-term Support:

the working group should consider ways to commemorate or remember the events as a community. Public outreach is central here, as memorial mechanisms should be guided by the victims and wider community:

- ① On the individual level, 'crisis counselling related to birthdays of victims, holidays, important family anniversaries, and [at least] the first anniversary of the event' ⁵⁴ will be important.
- ② On a collective level, symbols 'have the ability to strengthen identity and generate solidarity to encourage proper conduct, order and confidence. Symbols may be cultural emblems such as flags, logos, places or buildings, or events and performances such as rituals of mourning, candlelit demonstrations, wreath-laying ceremonies, memorial processions, etc.' ⁵⁵

In Kumanovo, community police officers have warned against the use of fireworks before the New Year holiday and at weddings, as the noise might trigger trauma following the 2015 clashes.

6

Communicating services

The working group should take a proactive approach to ensure the whole population is aware of the support available, including more hard-to-reach communities. While each service provider will publicise their specific offer, the local authority can ensure it has a centralised platform outlining all available services. Communications should be clear and disseminated widely, to 'help address any confusion over where people should go to if they need assistance'⁵⁶ – there should be common information across all partners' platforms including websites, social media and direct engagement.

Content	Dissemination tools	Additional considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current situation? • Where can I get information? • Where can I go for care? Does the care vary if I am a direct or indirect victim? • How can I deal with practical issues surrounding work, finances, etc.? • What are my rights regarding compensation or redress? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites • Flyers, brochures, billboards • Media (print, radio, television) • Social media • Helplines • Direct messaging, e.g. text campaigns and alerts • Partnership with tech platforms and search engines to have location-based alerts (as we have seen with COVID-19 or for local elections) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language needs: consider translation and interpretation services • Culture: communicate in person or through less direct channels or social media • Literacy rates: consider visual content or recording messages

Chapter 4

Leadership Response

Introduction

When a crisis unfolds, citizens look to their elected leaders and government institutions for guidance. Mayors and other senior officials are in a unique position to influence the local response. As actors mobilise to establish short-, medium- and long-term plans, it is the immediate response in the aftermath of an attack that dictates the success of efforts further down the line. Mayors, and their senior officials, have to take quick decisions under a high amount of pressure and uncertainty, and any major missteps can erode multi-agency or citizen trust, or derail future recovery efforts.




This chapter provides some key points for leaders to consider, drawing on advice from SCN members, ensuring they provide a sensitive and proportional response in those early days and weeks. Above all, leaders should aim to enhance trust and build unity between the population and local authorities, which will lay the groundwork for subsequent efforts.

Situation Analysis



Response

General Framework

 <p>Leadership</p>	<p>In an effort to ensure a comprehensive and co-ordinated response from the local authority, and with national government, local leaders (e.g. religious, cultural, activist) and communities, it is central that the mayor and senior officials have assigned responsibilities. For example, specific individuals might be better placed to liaise with certain communities than others (e.g. the official in charge of the department for education will liaise with schools). While tasks would ideally be established formally in advance, the mayor and cabinet should assign responsibilities quickly if they have not already done so.</p>
 <p>Moral Support</p>	<p>People will find comfort in their leaders' messages. While showing empathy, in particular towards victims and their families, is a natural and crucial reaction to an atrocity, spokespeople also need to remain open-minded regarding the indirect impact of their words on the wider population (e.g. communities of a similar ethnicity or religion to the perpetrators might receive considerable backlash). Trauma can have unexpected ramifications, which are important to acknowledge.</p>
 <p>Information and Guidance</p>	<p>Those with privileged intelligence should share as much information as possible to avoid the spread of rumours and disinformation and misinformation, within the bounds of security protocol. Even if there are no immediate updates, it is crucial to outline the steps being taken, any barriers to actions or causes for delay. Being seen as transparent is the cornerstone for trust.</p>

Joint religious ceremony: an example of united leadership in Kuwait

Following the bombing of a Shia mosque in Kuwait City in 2015, Kuwait political and religious leaders joined Shias and Sunnis alike for a ceremony at the Grand Mosque. Thousands of worshippers prayed to their own tradition next to each other and listened to unifying messages by the Sunni prayer leader.⁵⁷

Communications

Communicating is one of the main and most urgent tasks in the aftermath of an attack (see [chapter 2](#) for further guidance). While the mayor and local authority might have a general strategy, the chaos and emotional environment surrounding an emergency can easily lead to mistakes being made and gaps in messaging.

There will be at least three phases to the communications, all of which should always be guided by the priorities you've set.

Phase 1: Immediate reaction and engagement

Whether in person or through your team, you will need to ensure that the population is aware of what your reaction has been and what messaging you are conveying. In the immediate aftermath of an attack, it is important to focus on providing safety guidance, as well as official updates on the events and the local authority's response. This could be done via your official social media channels or any other rapid communication channels you have.

Phase 2: First official statement and/or appearance

It is essential to get your first official public statement and/or appearance right; people will hold you accountable for your words and reactions. Here we provide guidance on the messaging, but it is also important to think about your body language and your tone when delivering a statement in person.

Principles	Content of messaging	Audience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Resist war rhetoric * Avoid saying the perpetrator(s)' name, mention the names of the victims instead * Call for unity and global action * Consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * What the authorities know so far * What the authorities are doing to respond * Empathy for all those affected, and the wider community * Plans to provide frequent updates and further information * What actions, if any, the public need to do (e.g. stay away from certain areas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Victims and their families * Frontline service providers * Employees and colleagues * Communities sharing a similar background to the perpetrator(s) or those targeted * Other politicians * Wider population * Media

Phase 3: First direct engagements

Your first engagements will be equally important in demonstrating what your priorities are and how you are considering the events. For example, who you visit first (e.g. victims in hospital, other institutions related to the target of the attack, schools), what media outlets you talk to and the potential political allegiance that demonstrates, etc. Again, ensure that your actions are consistent and in line with the priorities you have set out from the beginning.

Case study: Pittsburgh Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting (October 2018)

On 27 October 2018, a man entered the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh (US) and opened fire on congregants during Shabbat celebrations, killing 11 people and wounding six others, including four police officers.⁵⁸ Mayor Bill Peduto gave an interview to the SCN, in which he recounted his immediate response to the deadliest anti-Semitic attack in American history at the time. Mayor Peduto's response has guided the design of this chapter. He gave us several useful tips:

- **Tip 1: Make sure to have multiple communication devices and mechanisms that work on different sources (phone signal, Ethernet, radio frequency) for both internal and external communications.**

During the attack, Mayor Peduto wanted to communicate as much as possible with the public, inspired by the response from the city of Boston to the 2013 marathon bombing. However, the network was crowded and his public information officer was unable to use his phone.

- **Tip 2: Be transparent and upfront with the public regarding the official response.**

'Even if there's nothing new to say, say there is nothing new to say.'

- **Tip 3: Be transparent about your top priorities in the immediate term.**

Mayor Peduto said his first priority would be the victims and the families. Second those who were wounded. Third was the Jewish community. Fourth was the greater Pittsburgh community.

- **Tip 4: Use your priorities to guide all future actions.**

Following the attack, there was an idea to close a major road in front of the synagogue. The public safety director did not want to because it was a major route to several hospitals. As families of the victims were his first priority, Mayor Peduto asked what they wanted. They did not want the road closed, so it stayed open.

Case study: Pittsburgh Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting (October 2018)

— **Tip 5: Trauma can have unexpected ramifications.**

‘Trauma brings back past trauma. Even if there is somebody who lives 15 miles away who isn’t Jewish, that has no connection to this whatsoever, they are going to be affected and you are going to have mass depression that will be brought on by that trauma.’ (Mayor Peduto, November 2019)

— **Tip 6: Do not politicise the events.**

‘There will always be an opportunity to talk about the political ramifications, legislation that is needed and anything else in the future. Don’t use that moment in the immediacy to move towards that type of discussion. Be able to understand that you can talk about that type of stuff with your staff, but when you are talking to the general public, they need to hear a voice that counters hate with compassion and love.’ (Mayor Peduto, November 2019)

Conclusion

How to Prepare?

When an incident such as a terror attack occurs, panic will spread and individuals will respond in unforeseen ways. While preparation will have its own limitations due to the unpredictability of human behaviour, it is central for local authorities to establish basic processes and systems for each aspect of the response. This will help minimise the potential for mismanagement and ensure that the city and its communities recover in a unified and effective way. This conclusion outlines the steps local authorities should take to prepare the post-incident response.

Developing plans

The guidelines developed for this toolkit should provide a base for mayors and senior officials to develop their own tailored plans on the various aspects of the response. [Annex 2](#) includes a variety of resources from other organisations to supplement this guidance. Plans should be developed in collaboration with relevant actors and in consultation with beneficiaries where appropriate. They should be reviewed and practised frequently to ensure all relevant stakeholders are well prepared. Annual simulations can be useful to embed knowledge and expose flaws in the system, for example a one-day exercise to 'practise' the response to a specific and evolving scenario, with all relevant staff involved.

In general, plans should include:

- **Roles and responsibilities:** ensure you have staff in charge of all tasks and steps described in the chapters.
- **Available resources and channels:** for example, a communications plan should include a spreadsheet of local social media groups and channels with a large following, most popular radio stations, key community leaders, citizens' associations, etc.
- **Prepared packages** of measures such as frequently asked questions, draft statements (or useful templates), dormant websites ready to be activated, hotlines and social media protocols.

Mapping Exercises

Mapping local stakeholders is useful for many areas of work, but particularly important for rapid response in times of crisis. Consider points of entry across the community, so that messages can reach the widest possible audience at speed. For communications, this includes more marginalised groups and individuals, who may otherwise be vulnerable to misinformation and disinformation or feel excluded from the recovery effort. Consider which methods of communication would resonate best for each group, and establish ongoing contact with key figures where possible. For example:

- *Media outlets (according to their respective affiliations or readership)*
- *Community leaders*
- *Faith leaders*
- *Sports teams*
- *Family physicians and hospitals*
- *Major employers*
- *Social workers*
- *Institutions (courts, universities, schools, trade union heads)*
- *Large cultural centres (music venues, museums, theatres, stadiums)*

Building Partnerships

Ideally, building partnerships will form part of the crisis response plans. The importance of these links is fourfold:

- ① Partners can help you understand your audience, informing the content and format of your response.
- ② Partners can support in disseminating your response to key groups and the general public.
- ③ Partners may be willing to amend their own response, for example by promoting information solely from the police or local authorities.
- ④ Partners can provide a 'temperature check' on how certain pockets of the community are responding to an attack. Partners may include:

- **Community liaison officers:** political officials, community leaders or members of civil society groups who have trust and credibility with residents.
- **Local media:** influence could relate to content, for example providing photographs and recordings to outlets as appropriate, or broader agreement on how to frame an evolving situation. It is important to consider 'geo-ethnic' media, which targets specific geographies or communities. In countries where media outlets are owned in part by political parties or ethnic groups, be prepared for messaging from them that may disrupt your communications strategies, and prepare a response.

'All too often the media are perceived as "opponents". But the institutions and the media need each other, and provide mutual feedback. To ensure the government has a favourable reception in terms of communication in a crisis situation, the media must be involved on a mutual basis. If not, the media will increasingly use informal sources. In small communities, these informal sources and rumours could become critically important.'

*SAFE-COMMS, The Terrorism Crisis Communication Manual for Public Authorities, March 2011, p. 13.

- **Private sector:** businesses can help amplify your response. Employers have unique and immediate access to their workforce and are sometimes more trusted than political institutions. They can therefore play a role in influencing reactions to such events.
- **Other cities:** cities that host important diasporas can help you access people who may be affected by events. This can be done through networks such as the SCN and community engagement (see chapter 1).

'Again, we are reminded that public–private interactions are crucial and must be developed before an incident occurs. Developing those relations before an incident helps facilitate the flow of information during crises and may help ensure that the data conveyed to first responders is accurate, such as changes in floor plans and access routes.'

* Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 'Lessons from the Mumbai terrorist attacks – Parts I and II', U.S. Government Publishing Office, 8 and 28 January 2009,

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111shrg49484/html/CHRG-111shrg49484.htm>

Annex 1: Worksheets

Community engagement	Step 1: Identify purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Identify the impact of the incident on the various communities <input type="radio"/> Identify the needs of each community in the short, medium and long term <input type="radio"/> Assess community skills and expertise, and people’s appetite to support wider post-incident responses <input type="radio"/> Develop a recovery plan for the community <input type="radio"/> Disseminate information and solicit ongoing feedback on the response <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ 	
	Step 2: Identify communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Target of the terrorist attack <input type="radio"/> Perceived to be related to the perpetrator(s) <input type="radio"/> Affected collaterally <input type="radio"/> At risk of radicalisation <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ 	[Community A – Insert name]
	Step 3: Identify the most appropriate entry points for each community	<p>Internal – case manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Desirable personality traits (empathetic, non-judgemental, open-minded) <input type="radio"/> Trusted by community A <input type="radio"/> Possesses a thorough understanding of community A’s dynamics and structures <p>External – community actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Established networks and partnerships within community A <input type="radio"/> High levels of trust and legitimacy 	[Name(s)] [Contact details] [Available resources (transportation budget, etc.)]
	Step 4: Identify outreach method(s) per community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> In-person outreach (e.g. knock on doors) <input type="radio"/> Public meetings and open houses <input type="radio"/> Working group <input type="radio"/> Media <input type="radio"/> Surveys <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ 	[Insert further details per option selected. For example if you select media, what platform is most relevant (which newspaper, radio station, social media page, etc.), who would be the point of contact and who should reach out to them, etc.]
	Step 5: Draw a long-term plan	How do you intend to sustain engagement over time? How will the community’s contributions be used? Are there any factors to account for (e.g. privacy)?

Public communications	Step 1: Context Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Who was targeted? * What was the motive given for the attack? * Were there any pre-existing tensions or events leading on to the attack? * How many people have been injured or killed? * What physical damage has been caused? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Which aspects of the emergency response went well, went poorly? * What are potential grievances among the population that need to be addressed? * What narratives are circulating in the public domain? * Is there one central point of information for the public to access? * What information is not known?
	Step 2: Identifying Internal Capabilities	<p>Who do you have in your team who can support with communications?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Public spokespeople <input type="radio"/> Senior communications official(s) <input type="radio"/> Communications staff in charge of different channels <input type="radio"/> Community engagement staff <input type="radio"/> Frontline services (education, health, etc.) <input type="radio"/> Public relations manager <p>What communications channels do you have access to? Official website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Public social media accounts <input type="radio"/> Public hotline <input type="radio"/> Citizen contact database (for outreach via physical mail or email) <input type="radio"/> Local media (TV, radio, newspapers) <input type="radio"/> Access to religious or public institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.) <input type="radio"/> Internal communications channels (other agencies, e.g. police, education sector) 	<p>[Name(s)]</p> <p>[Contact details]</p> <p>[Target audience and reach]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>[Denomination]</p> <p>[Contact person]</p> <p>[Person responsible for outreach]</p> <p>[Reach: number of people, population segments or communities]</p>
	Step 3: Communications Framework	<p>Regularity of communications: how often are you able or do you wish to provide an update?</p> <p>Sources of information: which sources of information do you want to use and encourage the population to use?</p> <p>Content: what do you want to communicate about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Status updates <input type="radio"/> Guidance, for example available support services, sources of information, etc 	<p>[Every X amount of time on X platform]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>[For live updates on the attack, consult X]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>[For information on specific victims, consult X]</p> <p>.....</p>
	Step 4: Partners	<p>Political officials: what political officials, including from the opposition, would it be important to show a united front with?</p> <p>Dissemination partners: based on the stakeholder mapping exercise (see page 34), and following an analysis of your internal capabilities and communications needs, which partners can support the dissemination of your message to enable you to reach your audience and spread your messaging?</p>	<p>[Name(s)]</p> <p>[Contact details]</p> <p>[Target audience and reach]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
	Step 5: Monitoring	<p>For each platform used to disseminate your communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Are you able to monitor the public response? * Who is in charge of the monitoring? * What resources (incl. human resources) do they have? * How often should they report back on the public response? * To whom should they report the results? 	<p>[Platform: identify who is responsible to monitor, their resources, frequency of monitoring, the reporting mechanism]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>



Psychosocial Support	Step 1: Set up Working Group	<p>Mayor’s cabinet or assigned ministry responsibility:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Person in charge of the working group (a lead) has been assigned, given a clear mandate and allocated necessary or available resources</p> <hr/> <p>Working group lead’s responsibilities:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Terms of reference⁵⁹ for the working group created, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Role and purpose <input type="radio"/> Membership criteria <input type="radio"/> Roles and responsibilities, including principles to abide by (e.g. confidentiality, do no harm) <input type="radio"/> Meeting guidelines <input type="radio"/> Ways of working (e.g. communication channel – email, WhatsApp group) <p><input type="radio"/> Template for database of service providers and supporting actors</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Template for database of beneficiaries</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Evaluation log</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other documents as appropriate</p>	<p>[Name and contact details]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
	Step 2: Identify Members	<p>What tools and resources do you have the resources and capabilities to use to draw up a comprehensive list of potential members?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Existing database or platform of available services (incl. social media groups)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Direct outreach</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Open or town hall meeting(s)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Community engagement activities</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other: _____</p>	<p>[Register names of service providers, contact details, thematic area of work and type of services available, geographic reach, languages spoken by staff, and any other relevant factors]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
	Step 3: Identify Beneficiaries	<p>Identify categories (and sub-categories as appropriate):</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Direct victims and survivors</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Next of kin</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Emergency services</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Secondary victims</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Government employees</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other: _____</p>	<p>The objective here is not necessarily to have a database of names with contact details, but to identify the various groups that will benefit from psychosocial support, and who the service providers will be. To this end, simply nam-ing the beneficiary group and assigning the right service provider(s) will suffice, as service providers can then have their own database with names.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
	Step 4: Give Support to Needs and Risks Assessments	<p><input type="radio"/> Ensure there are sub-working groups with a clear lead conducting needs and risk assessments for each dimensions identified (incl. psychological or social, information and advice, physical health, practical and safety, financial)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Compile needs and risk assessments regularly</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Ensure there is access to the wider group (being mindful of confidentiality)</p>	<p>[Indicate in the database of service providers who is leading or supporting what assess-ments]</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

Psychosocial Support	Step 5: Assemble Support Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Design a matrix linking available local support services to various beneficiaries according to their needs and risks <input type="radio"/> Identify additional support mechanisms (e.g. from national level) <input type="radio"/> Conduct analysis to identify any unaddressed needs <input type="radio"/> Set up communications looking into unaddressed needs and alternatives <input type="radio"/> Systematise an evaluation framework into the working group's regular meetings (to assess emerging needs, challenges and responses)
	Step 6: Communicate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Compile a public version of the list of services available, including target beneficiaries, contact details and any other relevant information <input type="radio"/> Identify platforms for dissemination of the list and its format (online or print), for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Working group members' networks <input type="radio"/> Local authority website, social media, announcement board, etc. <input type="radio"/> Internal mailing lists (for further dissemination within networks) <input type="radio"/> External partners, e.g. hospitals, police, schools and universities, community centres, media <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ <input type="radio"/> Review mechanisms of the list identified to ensure continuous updating and dissemination thereafter

Leadership	Step 1: Take a Moment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * What do you usually do to overcome stress and gather your thoughts? * What will you need to get through the day? * Is there anyone you can quickly call for advice or moral support? 	[Name and contact details]
	Step 2: Get a full briefing on the situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Who was targeted? * What was the motive given for the attack? * Was there any history behind the attack? * How many people have been injured and killed? * What physical damage has been caused? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * What emergency actors are on the ground? * What are potential grievances among the population that need to be addressed immediately? * What narratives are circulating in the public domain? * How could the situation develop or escalate?
	Step 3: Revise the chain of command	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Identify what people you want on the team with whom you will be co-ordinating your response <input type="radio"/> Communicate your priorities to them <input type="radio"/> Identify the areas you want to take decisions on <input type="radio"/> Identify what the decision-making hierarchy is <input type="radio"/> Identify the intervals for communication with your team <input type="radio"/> Decide who is allowed to speak in public and what they are allowed to communicate 	Make sure team members represent the relevant sectors to the immediate response
	Step 4: Identify priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Who or what are the priorities which will guide your communications and response? * How are you communicating them internally and publicly? 	You probably would not want to identify more than 3 or 4 priorities.
	Step 5: Immediate public communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Identify what platform enables you to provide regular updates to your citizens (e.g. Twitter account, radio) <input type="radio"/> Assign someone to take control of those communications if you are not doing it yourself <input type="radio"/> Identify the scope of these communications, e.g. protection guidance coming from the police <input type="radio"/> Identify the frequency of these communications 	
	Step 6: First public appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bearing in mind your priorities, what should your first message focus on? * What words will you use? What body language? * Who will you refer to? 	It is essential to get the first public appearance right, people will hold you accountable for your words and reactions.
	Step 7: Medium-term response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bearing in mind your priorities, as always, who do you call first? * Who do you visit first; where do you want to be seen? * What media outlets do you want to consider talking to? 	

Annex 2: Additional resources

Name	Description	Author	Target audience and geographic scope	Link
Community engagement				
Good Practices on Community Engagement and Community-Oriented Policing as Tools to Counter Violent Extremism	Good practices that can inform countering violent extremism policies, approaches and programmes related to community engagement and community-oriented policing initiatives, as well as create a foundation for continued dialogue, collaboration and research among interested members of the Global Counterterrorism Forum and other interested stakeholders.	Global Counterterrorism Forum	National governments	https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/GCTF%20CVE%20Good%20Practices_1.pdf
Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Community Engagement and Empowerment	Includes methods, lessons learned and examples of existing programmes to conduct community engagement and empowerment to prevent and counter violent extremism.	Radicalisation Awareness Network (European Union)	European Union governments and public authorities	https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices/docs/community_engagement_and_empowerment_en.pdf
Community Planning Toolkit – Community Engagement	Provides guidance on the issues to consider when planning and designing community engagement, focusing on quality and effectiveness, process planning and designing engagement tailored to the particular issue, level of participation to be achieved, timeframe and range of stakeholders affected.	Community Places	Community engagement actors in the UK	https://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement0815.pdf
Engaging Communities Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Community Engagement	This community engagement toolkit provides introductory information and practical guidance on the issues to consider when planning and designing community engagement activities.	West Lothian Community Planning Partnership	Range of individuals such as local workers, voluntary organisations and community members	https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/9397/Community-Engagement-Toolkit/pdf/Engaging_Communities_Toolkit.pdf
Resilience Builder: Tools for Strengthening Disaster Resilience in Your Community	Resilience Builder is a community toolkit that builds on existing resources in your community to strengthen resilience. It is presented in six sections and offers strategies to increase resilience. The hope is that your community will be able to use the toolkit to identify community needs to guide resilience work plans, evaluate progress, and support the development of resilience over the long term.	Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Emergency Preparedness and Response Program; RAND Corporation; and Community Partners	Community members, organisations and agencies	http://www.laresilience.org/documents/resilience-builder.pdf
Communications				
The Terrorism Crisis Communication Manual for Public Authorities	The manual aims to help address communication issues related to terrorism; contains no 'readytouse' solutions, but shows basic rules and procedures for an effective counterterrorism crisis communication; and advises on the development or optimisation of crisis communication plans and expert reports, and how to integrate them into existing crisis plans.	SAFECOMMS	Public institutions and authorities, and companies throughout Europe	https://faculty.biu.ac.il/~sshpiro/crisis_manual.html

Name	Description	Author	Target audience and geographic scope	Link
Towards a Framework for PostTerrorist Incident Communications Strategies	This paper identifies the need for postterrorist incident communications strategies, draws out pertinent lessons from a multidisciplinary literature analysis and outlines key considerations for the technology, government and media sectors when creating guidelines to respond to terrorist events.	Royal United Services Institute	Technology, government and media sectors	https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/20190809_grntt_paper_12.pdf
Crisis Management for Terrorist Related Events	The guidance will help organisations deploy communications to mitigate the harmful and often 'longtail' effects of a terrorist incident on brand and business reputation, value and continuity.	Chartered Institute of Public Relations and Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure	All organisations in charge of sites and venues UKwide, and organisations looking to protect their computer systems from interference by cyber hackers	https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/de/eb/Crisis_Management_for_Terrorist_Related_Events.pdf
Crisis Management and Crisis Communications during a Terrorist Attack or Active Shooter Incident	Basic advice and recommendations, with a focus on three main areas: crisis and emergency management, incl. business continuity management; internal and external crisis communication; and taking care of directly affected employees and clients, next of kin, and the rest of the workforce.	Smart Risk Solutions	Private sector	https://www.smartrisksolutions.de/assets/handbook-crisis-management-crisis-communication-terrorist-attack-active-shooter.pdf
Zamboanga Learning Review on PostConflict Community Engagement	The document's general objectives are to ensure that learning related to communication, information correlated with internally displaced persons, accountability of humanitarian actors and government, and community participation in the Zamboanga Siege response is captured and documented; and to bring key actors (at national and local levels) together to reflect on their experiences of developing goals and strategies for future emergency response in an armedconflict situation.	Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication	Actors involved in humanitarian communication in armedconflict settings	https://www.alnap.org/help-library/zamboanga-learning-review-on-post-conflict-community-engagement
Communications After an Attack	This paper considers the strategic dynamics of media and communications after an attack, good practices and lessons learned from several highprofile terrorist attacks, and the roles of different stakeholders, in order to establish some recommendations and solutions for the sector.	Radicalisation Awareness Network (EU)	Actors involved in postattack communications, originally aimed at the Radicalisation Awareness Network	https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-c-and-n/docs/ran_c-n_communications_after_an_attack_lisbon_en.pdf
Terrorism and the Media. A Handbook for Journalists	The purpose of the manual is to assist the media in finding the balance between freedom and the responsibility to inform; between the right to know and the duty to protect, while respecting the fundamental norms and values of journalism.	UNESCO	Media actors reporting on terrorism	https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247074

Name	Description	Author	Target audience and geographic scope	Link
Communications				
Generic Framework for Discussing a Terrorist Attack	This resource can help teachers of primary and secondary age pupils respond immediately to unforeseen events. It can be adapted to a range of situations, and provides a framework for young people to discuss terrorist attacks, as well as opportunities to process what has happened in the safety of a classroom.	PSHE Association	Teachers addressing pupils age 5 to 18	https://educateagainsthate.com/resources/generic-framework-discussing-terrorist-attack/
Psychosocial support				
Enhancing the Resilience of Victims After Terrorist Attacks	This issue paper proposes how to strengthen the resilience of victims and the broader society after a terrorist attack, building on the experience and advice of victims from past attacks. To operationalise resilience, the resilience—needs—challenges model is used to assess the situation of victims of terrorism.	Radicalisation Awareness Network (EU)	This tool can be used to design an approach, as a checklist or as an evaluation tool for governments, selfhelp groups of victims of terrorism and professionals supporting victims	https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-rvt/docs/enhancing_resilience_victims_after_terrorist_attacks_032018_en.pdf
IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings	These guidelines present a multisectoral, interagency framework that enables effective coordination, identifies useful practices and flags potentially harmful practices, and clarifies how different approaches to mental health and psychosocial support complement one another.	InterAgency Standing Committee (formed of UN and nonUN humanitarian organisations)	All government and nongovernment humanitarian actors	https://www.who.int/mental-health/emergencies/guidelines/iasc_mental_health_psychosocial_june_2007.pdf
Handbook of Good Practices to Support Victims' Associations in Africa and the Middle East	The United Nations gathered the valuable knowledge and experience of participating victims' associations from across Africa and the Middle East, distilling them into this handbook.	United Nations Office of CounterTerrorism	Primarily civil society organisations across Africa and the Middle East	https://www.un.org/victimsofterrorism/sites/www.un.org.victimsofterrorism/files/oct-uncct-handbook_of_good_practices_to_support_victim27s_associations_-web.pdf

Name	Description	Author	Target audience and geographic scope	Link
Social media platforms monitoring⁶⁰				
Bellingcat's Online Investigation Toolkit	The toolkit includes satellite and mapping services, tools for verifying photos and videos, websites to archive web pages, and much more. There are guides at the end of the document, highlighting the methods and use of these tools in further detail.	Bellingcat		https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BfLPlpRtyq4RFtHJoNpvWQjmGnyVkfE2HYoICKOGguA/edit
Google Advanced Search	Advanced search is a builtin feature of Google (and most search websites) that allows a user to specify additional requirements for a search. When used for searching the web, an advanced search gives additional information to Google, which helps refine the search.	Google		https://www.google.com/advanced_search
Google Alerts	Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your queries or key words.	Google		https://www.google.com/alerts
Hootsuite	Tool that enables users to spot, track and analyse trends and sentiment in real time on social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.	Hootsuite Inc.	The tool is available in Bahasa Indonesia, English, French, German, Italian, Mandarin, Portuguese and Spanish	https://hootsuite.com/
TweetReach	Identify the reach of your tweets. With a free Union Metrics account, you will get features such as running and saving unlimited TweetReach snapshots and running an Instagram account checkup.	Union Metrics	Twitter account holders	https://tweetreach.com/social-analytics/
Who posted what?	This tool can help you find posts on Facebook. It is possible to search for a specific date, a single month or year, or only a particular month in a specific year. It is also possible to use two or more keywords like 'terror attack Paris'. You can also search in posts that were posted in between two specific dates. It is possible to search in between two years, in between months of different years and in between two specific dates. You can again use more keywords.	Henk van Ess, Daniel Endresz, Dan Nemeč, Tormund Gerhardsen		https://www.whopostedwhat.com/

Endnotes

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