UNESCO

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Terrorism
and the Media

A Handbook for Journalists

Foreword

It should be clear to everyone why a publication such as this, on the coverage of terrorism and violent extremism in the media, is urgently needed.

Around the world we see various actors staging violence against civilians to foster fear and suspicion of others. We see populations in many countries convinced that terrorism represents the most significant threat to their daily lives. We see political movements that take advantage of tragedy and pit citizens against each other in order to gain greater support. It is critical to reflect on how the media may be inadvertently contributing to this tense climate, and what steps should be taken to address this.

It is important to remember that terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Many countries have suffered for decades from groups, both internal and external and including both State and non-State actors, wielding violence against civilians as political strategy. In many cases, the local population emerged stronger and more resilient, proving that brutality is no match in the long term for the progress of unity and shared values.

In this context, the media are critical in providing verifiable information and informed opinion. During the tense environment of a crisis, with populations on edge and tempers flared, this becomes all the more important. The relationship between terrorism and media is complex and fraught. At its worst, it is a perverse symbiotic relationship – terrorist groups devising spectacles of violence to continue drawing the world's attention, and the media incentivised to provide wall-to-wall coverage due to huge audience interest.

Of course, this is not to minimise the real human suffering that terrorism causes. Far too many lives have been cut short by it. These acts must always be deplored, and those accountable brought to justice.

It is important to remember that the goal of these violent actors is not to bring terror for terror's sake. They do not wish to create fear in the minds of men and women simply because of their interests, hatred or ideology. Their real objective is to cleave society down the centre, turning people against each other by provoking repression, discrimination and discord. They aim to simultaneously prove themselves correct in their predictions of widespread persecution and to attract new followers to their violent cause. They seek to create a mood of

defeatism in the face of attacks and polarised reactions.

The real risk of terrorism is that fear and suspicion will drive a new wave of nationalism and populism, and that the freedoms we have all worked so hard to achieve will be sacrificed on the altar of retribution. These are not attacks on one nation or people, but attacks on all of us as global citizens. We should be especially critical of any response that plays wilfully into the hands of violent actors, and which generates its own victims who become martyrs for further terrorist recruitment.

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In these difficult times, with fragmented audiences and many media organizations undergoing severe financial challenges, journalists must resist the urge to sensationalise matters in the interest of attracting eyeballs, ears or clicks.

They must keep a global perspective, and pay attention to the words they use, the examples they cite, and the images they display.

They must avoid speculation and finger-pointing in the immediate confusion following an attack when nothing is known, yet the demand for information is perhaps the strongest of all.

They must consider carefully the fact that there is something inherent in terrorism as a violent act that provokes a fear in many that is far disproportionate to the actual level of risk.

They must do all of this while ensuring they not put themselves or their staff in harm's way in the pursuit of a story.

And most of all, they must avoid fostering division and hatred and radicalisation at both margins of society.

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During times of crisis, from natural disasters and famine to conflict and, in this case, terrorism, UNESCO works actively through its specialised sectors to monitor the situation, evaluate needs and respond in an appropriate and efficient manner.
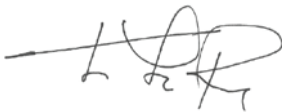
We are contributing our experience and expertise to the implementation of the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, through education, youth participation and empowerment, promoting freedom of expression, and safeguarding and celebrating cultural diversity all over the world.

We are working with our partners to fight the illicit trafficking of cultural objects that can provide a source of financing for extremist groups, and continuing to promote our core values of tolerance, understanding and peace at a time when they are being challenged.

It is hoped that the contribution of this guidebook, developed with the inputs of journalists, editors and media producers, will act as a critical resource for those covering terrorist events. Not every question posed has a clear and incontestable answer, but will at least encourage self-reflection on the part of media professionals as to how they can avoid contributing to stigmatisation and division. It may also provide a basis for the creation and revision of codes of practice to ensure the above values are enshrined in the daily operations of media organizations.

This guidebook is also just one step in a concerted UNESCO response to the issue of how the media covers terrorism and violent extremism. The advice and suggestions contained within will be developed into training materials to help journalists around the world become more aware of the various dimensions of these issues.

Terrorism and violent extremism are likely problems that will be with us for some time. Yet if we can work together to reduce the explosive rhetoric, over-blown coverage and stigmatisation of minority groups, perhaps some of the incentive to commit violence against civilians will disappear along with it.

Frank La Rue
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for Communication and Information

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Introduction

Terrorism and the fight against terrorism have become major elements of domestic and international politics, with the media firmly on the front lines, especially when attacks target civilian populations.

The dilemmas and challenges that result are immediately clear. Citizens expect the media to inform them as completely as possible without going overboard or resorting to sensationalism. The authorities call for restraint by evoking the risks of excessive coverage for the integrity of operations or the calm of the population. Accusations of being the megaphone of terrorism to attract audiences weigh constantly on media, who are often operating on over-drive.

Despite the significance and recurrence of terrorist acts, the media often struggles to find its footing. "Often questions are asked and matters settled only in an emergency, at the risk of incoherence and blunder," says Christophe Ayad, a Middle East specialist at *Le Monde*. "Everyone fumbles around, advancing on a case-by-case basis."[1]

The quality of terrorism coverage obviously depends on many factors. It is determined, among other things, by the degree of freedom of the press in each country, the economic resources available to the media, cultural factors and singular conceptions of ethics and the social role of the media, notes Shyam Tekwani, regarding the situation in Asia.[2]

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1   http://www.lemonde.fr/actualite-medias/article/2014/09/25/les-medias-face-a-l-etat-islamique_4494681_3236.html
2   Shyam Tekwani (Ed.), *Media & Conflict Reporting in Asia*, Asian Media Information & Communica-tion Centre (AMIC), 2008, p. 2.

The issue is crucial because this coverage of terrorism reveals the position of the media within society. "A reporter's ability to practice responsible reporting and due-diligence with the speed needed in our digital age is critical to fulfilling the civic duty that journalists maintain in our world," said Somali-American journalist Mukhtar Ibrahim following the 2013 attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi.[3]

Their reactions also determine the impact of terrorism on society. "The media are caught in an infernal dilemma," writes French lawyer Antoine Garapon. "On the one hand, the media echo is likely to make victims the unintentional messengers of their executioners' search for glory; on the other, self-censorship could be interpreted as a capitulation. Fear can lead to the reclamation of hard-won freedoms and eventually reduce the difference between democratic states and authoritarian regimes — precisely what terrorists seek."[4]

After each attack, experts question the extent and tone of media coverage. They compare the deaths due to terrorism to the number of victims of natural disasters, wars or road accidents, calling for more restraint on the media. But the comparison is most often specious because of the eminently political and societal nature of the attacks: "In 2014, the average rate of homicide worldwide was 6.24 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, while the number killed by Terrorism was only 0.47 per 100,000, but if these figures are relatively low compared to other causes of death, the consequences of terrorism are beyond measure", writes the Venezuelan political scientist Moises Naim. "Terrorism is not the deadliest threat of the 21st century, but it has undeniably changed the world." Yet despite this, is the amount of terrorism coverage in the media not disproportionate?

The purpose of this manual is to review these considerations and challenges. It is based on essential and universal principles: the search for truth, independence and a sense of responsibility, by placing them in the complex context of a pluralistic and interconnected world. Its ambition 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.

A critical subject

In recent years, we've seen widely-covered attacks from New York to Moscow, Paris to Istanbul, Buenos Aries to Mumbai. Yet these high-profile events do not provide a full picture of global terrorism. In northern Nigeria, in Cameroon, in regions under the control of drug cartels in Latin America – communities are also terrorised, reduced to silence and fear. On the seas, the threat of maritime ter-

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3   http://sahanjournal.com/westgate-attack-nairobi-al-shabaab-twitter/
4   Antoine Garapon, «Que nous est-il arrivé? », *Esprit*, February 2015, Paris, p. 6.

rorism persists, particularly off the coasts of Somalia and Yemen or in the Gulf of Guinea. From Syria to the Philippines, kidnappings and hostage-taking have proliferated in recent years, converting some areas of the planet into prohibited territories. And this violence has spread to the Internet, targeted by cyber attacks that spread beyond the virtual realm.

The most widely-covered violence is that with purportedly religious claims, but the scourge is also motivated by extreme right-wing nationalism or supremacism, such as the Oslo bombing and the Utøya massacre perpetrated by Anders Behring Breivik in 2011 in Norway, the shooting of African Americans at the Baptist Church in Charleston, United States in June 2015 and the assassination of British Labor MP Jo Cox in June 2016.

The media are no doubt at the heart of this issue, often referred to as the "oxygen of terrorism", in the famous words of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. "Terrorist attacks," wrote Brian Jenkins back in 1995, "are often carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic media and the international press. Terrorism is aimed at the people watching, not at the actual victims."[5]

This characterisation of the media does not imply actual sympathy felt or displayed for terrorist groups, but rather refers to the publicity that they provide them and consequently the power of nuisance that they grant them. The media economy, largely based on a competitive race to attract audiences, incentivises this symbiotic relationship between terrorists and the press.

Terrorists rely upon conventional journalistic codes of drama, violence and surprise, especially for television. But with the exponential development of the Internet and social networks, the battle of images and words has taken on an unprecedented scale. As highlighted in a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime[6], terrorist groups are using the legal web, especially social networks such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter[7], but also the Deep Web and the Dark Web as a means of propaganda, networking, recruitment and funding. "For the first time, terrorists no longer have to depend upon other people to spread their message,"[8] writes Shyam Tekwani, a researcher from the Singapore Internet Research Centre, regarding Asia. "In addition to creating their

> **"Terrorist attacks are often carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic media and the international press. Terrorism is aimed at the people watching, not at the actual victims."**

5   https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/papers/2008/P5261.pdf
6   https://www.unodc.org/documents/frontpage/Use_of_Internet_for_Terrorist_Purposes.pdf
7   http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2015/03/isis-twitter-census-berger-morgan
8   in Paul Smith, *Terrorism and Violence in South East Asia*, Eastgate Books, 2005, p. 228.

own websites, groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front or the Abu Sayyaf group are using technologies such as electronic mail, mobile phones, SMS and radio and video technologies to communicate with each other and to disseminate their messages to the general public." This allows them, he adds, "to frame their actions and ideology however they want, getting around government or media censorship." This shift in the 'oxygen of terrorism' towards the online space has driven some organizations, including governments, to fight back against violent extremist websites and to demand that major web platforms closely monitor and "clean up" the Internet.

The emergence of the Islamic State group *(see: Words, page 52)* has exacerbated this phenomenon, in that the group has implemented a much more sophisticated system of global strategic propaganda than Al-Qaida. Its messages exploit both psychological and religious well-springs[9] and bypass in part (but only in part) the traditional media. The media effect of attacks on the target population, designed to generate fear, is also a kind of 'staging' aimed at seducing new supporters. The Islamic State group has mastered communication techniques and social networks and, above all, it proposes an alluring "narrative" of heroism and virility, sometimes relayed unwisely by traditional media.

In spite of these new online battlefields, traditional media remain crucial stakeholders, as the information and analysis they provide remains in most countries the foundation for a large proportion of public opinion – the very public opinion that terrorism seeks to influence. Traditional media have not always taken the measure of their responsibility in this great propaganda game, and enter into the macabre dance of terror through the theatricalisation of information that hands terrorists the wand of murderous choreography. Repetitive broadcasting of videos depicting columns of soldiers parading in Raqqa or the warlike bravado of ecstatic "foreign fighters" driving around in 4X4s enters into the realm of "heroisation" of the group, warns media sociologist Hasna Hussein.[10]

"In some respects," notes Michelle Ward Ghetti, Professor of Law At Southern University (United States), "the modern terrorist is created by the media. The latter broaden and enlarge the terrorist and his powers far beyond his true dimension. Television puts everyone at the scene of a crime, helpless to do anything, engendering feelings of anxiety and fear, the terrorist's instrument of coercion. The public anxiety enhances the perceived power of the terrorist in his own eyes as well as the eyes of the peer groups and others. This enhanced power often leads to imitation and the cycle repeats itself."[11]

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9   http://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICCT-Gartenstein-Ross-IS-Global-Propaganda-Strategy-March2016.pdf
10   http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2016/06/18/terrorisme-assez-ave-les-scoops-de-l-epouvante_4953153_3232.html
11   Michelle Ward Ghetti, « The Terrorist Is A Star! Regulating Media Coverage of Publicity Seeking Crimes », *Federal Communications Law Journal*, Volume 60/Issue 3, 2008, p. 495.

This equation between terrorism and the media, however, is not unequivocal. First, a large number of attacks, as Brigitte Nacos[12] (Columbia University, New York) argues, have no "media intent" and are "self-sufficient". The cascade of attacks perpetrated in Iraq falls into this "non-media" category. There is also no evidence that silence on terrorist actions would suffice to remove the "oxygen" from them. On the contrary, some say, "radio silence" could cause terrorist groups to escalate their attacks and commit more and more violence so that nobody can ignore them. Finally, the study of terrorist incidents tends to show that the media can to some extent be the "stifler" of terrorism and not its oxygen. Recalling the attacks on the team of Israeli athletes at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972, the researcher at CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research, France) Jacques Tarnero concluded that "the Palestinian cause will long have the hooded face of a killer. The political effect of sympathy sought has turned into the very opposite."[13] Others argue, however, that for groups such as the Islamic State, the desire for respectability, the ultimate goal of a power struggle, is less decisive than the will to intimidate and the narcissism of power, largely conveyed through media coverage.

Although seemingly paradoxical, States targeted by terrorism are often reinforced by these traumatic events. It is indisputable that, as a first step, before questions and recriminations about causes and responsibilities arise, terrorism unites the nation or society it strikes, and that during this "national union" period the media generally plays along. "As in other internal crises," writes Doris Graber, a professor at the University of Illinois (United States), "the media and journalists behave like team members, joining the authorities to try to restore public order, security and tranquillity."[14] The media play an essential public interest role in the early stages of an attack. The public, worried and frightened, expects precise information, safety advice and analysis. Contrary to the cliché, sometimes politically malicious, about "the irresponsibility of the media," they have, at many moments in the tormented history of recent years, taken this task very seriously. It is not as if there have only been abuses, gaffes and excesses on TV screens, websites and social networks.

The coverage of terrorism by the media is not limited, however, to these dramatic moments that rupture normality. The quality of journalism and its usefulness to society depend on other factors, particularly its questions about the phenomenon itself, its origins and consequences. Beyond emergencies and newsflashes, the coverage of terrorism requires special investigative and analytical capacities on topics of great complexity affecting international politics, internal political power relations, religion and transnational crime.

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12   Brigitte L. Nacos, *Terrorism & the Media. From the Iran Hostage Crisis to the World Trade Center Bombing*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, p. 53.
13   Jacques Tarnero, *Les Terrorismes*, Editions Milan, Toulouse, 1998, p. 46.
14   Doris A. Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, Congressional Quarterly Press, 1980, p. 239.

Attacks can be revelatory for the media, their mode of operation, their reflexes and routines, but also their principles and values. "Terrorism is probably one of the areas where professional competence is most needed," note Michel Wieviorka and Dominique Wolton in *Front Page Terrorism*. "Journalists are very often attracted to terrorism, for three factors of which they should be careful: the event, a trap that attracts the press in the most stereotyped behaviors of the trade; the actors mobilised by the terrorist act (which create fascination); and power (from which the right distance is neither easy to determine nor free of contradiction)."

These questions are of an ethical nature and particularly relate to media representations of violence. But they are also political. Attacks are not fixed in the classic cycle of news, in which one news item quickly follows another. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, journalists sensed that these attacks had opened a new chapter in history. Katherine E. Finkelstein, who had covered the events for the *New York Times*, concluded her testimony in the *American Journalism Review* with six auspicious words: "The terrible story had just begun."[15] Echoing this sentence, "there was a feeling that the dying had only begun"[16] was the last line of an article of the columnist Pete Hamill published in the *New York Daily News* in the aftermath of the attacks.

Terrorism aims not only to frighten, but also to exacerbate and polarise. In this regard, the Islamic State group speaks of the "gray zone", "where there is diversity, tolerance, understanding, discussion and debate. It is where there is exchange and enquiry and curiosity," wrote the journalist from British daily *The Guardian*, Jason Burke, in *The New Threat*.[17] In an article in its *Dabiq* magazine in early 2015, the terrorist organization advocated eliminating this gray zone so that there would be only two groups face to face: "the Caliphate and the Crusaders". The stakes are therefore considerable: it is a question of avoiding contributing to this fatal polarisation by shortcuts, imprudent phrases, stigmatisations and generalisations *(See: Generalisations, page 65)*. The mission of the media, as the Czech writer Milan Kundera said, is "to shed light on the complexity of the real," and not to simplify it to the point where it no longer represents reality.

Terrorism also tests the freedom and independence of the media -- it could be said that, to a certain extent, it takes these values hostage. After mass attacks, the media, by patriotism, by calculation or under duress, generally choose to follow the injunctions of their governments or the emotions of public opinion, at the risk of excessive self-censorship and turning themselves into megaphones of state power. National security, geopolitical stakes or the demands of living

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15   Katherine E. Finkelstein, « 40 Hours in Hell », *American Journalism Review,* November 2001.
16   Pete Hamill, « Death Takes Hold Among the Living », *New York Daily News*, 12 September 2001.
17   *The New Threat From Islamic Militancy*, The Bodley Head, London, 2015, p. 244.

together all legitimately lead to calls for restraint, but also more problematically for censorship too.

Too often, some states have used the "terrorism" argument to silence the media and bring disruptive journalists under control. They have also abused the term to incriminate and criminalise legitimate opinions or actions. The public has also acted as a censor, criticising the media that appeared to them to deviate too far from the official line or to be too "understanding" with respect to the "opposing camp". Reflecting on the behaviour of the media after September 11, 2001, Kim Campbell wondered in the *Christian Science Monitor* whether "journalism can rhyme with patriotism," whether the omnipresence of American flags on screens or ribbons sported by television presenters "would not interfere with the (journalistic) mission of asking difficult questions to politicians." There are other views to this question that see no issue at stake.

Despite its violence, terrorism, however, can not stifle the media. On the contrary. In these moments of tension and anxiety, free and pluralistic information is more essential than ever to illuminate the judgment of the public. When the security of the population is directly targeted, the media must protect both the population and democracy by exercising their right and duty to inform. For the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, "terrorism should not affect freedom of expression and information in the media as one of the essential foundations of any democratic society. This freedom includes the right to be informed of matters of general interest, including terrorist acts and threats, and the replies thereto by the State and international organizations." This is an approach echoed by the former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Jan Eliasson: "Freedom of the media is a defense against terrorist discourse," he told a Security Council session on the stories and ideologies of terrorism on May 11, 2016 in New York.[18]

The suppression of information has its dangers. "It can undermine the credibility of the media ("what other information does it hide?"), give free rein to the craziest rumors and disrupt our sense of information," notes American TV channel CBS in its code of conduct. More fundamentally, democracy must learn to live with risk and manage it without undermining the foundations and values that underpin it. "If we can not tolerate the exaggerated horror flashed on the evening news or the random bomb without recourse to the tyrants manual," said New York-based historian of terrorism John Bowyer Bell, "then we do not deserve to be free."[19]

The challenge to the media is broad. Terrorism is a subject that involves a cascade of concrete and often very cumbersome decisions, including the life of hostages, the ability of the security forces to intervene, the legitimacy of a government, and even the survival of the political system. While the classic rules

18   http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12355.doc.htm
19   in *The Roots of Terrorism*, Richardson, Louise (Ed.), Routledge, New York, 2006, p. 61.

of journalistic practice can still be imposed, they take on a more serious dimension because of the violence involved and the stakes for journalistic ethics.[20]

These decisions are also complicated by the massive intrusion of social networks that have changed the way information is handled. Terrorist groups are producing their own videos and managing their own narratives by speaking directly to the public, without the filtering or mediation of journalists. In addition, millions of citizens are actively participating in the making and dissemination of information without being held to the rules of journalistic ethics. These new media impose new demands on the existing media. "We face danger whenever information growth outpaces our understanding of how to process it," statistical journalist Nate Silver (United States) warns in his bestseller *The Signal and The Noise*. More than ever, the ethical and professional standards of information processing are essential: to validate facts, contextualise and make sense, to navigate the chaos, confusion and fear created by terrorist violence. "Publicity may be the oxygen of terrorists," noted Katharine Graham, the director of the *Washington Post* during the Watergate and Pentagon Records scandals, but "news is the lifeblood of liberty."

20   http://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/Journalism%20Ethics_Global%20Debate.pdf

Passengers wait to receive medical attention after an attack involving Sarin nerve gas in the Tokyo Subway system in March 1995.

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Key points

→ Naming is, to a certain extent, choosing a side

→ Terrorism has no official definition

→ Terrorism and resistance: a crucial difference

→ State terrorism: a "form of government"

→ "Glorification of terrorism": an expression to be carefully defined

→ Not all terrorism is "religiously-inspired"

→ Establish and report the facts, without stereotype or generalisation

→ Lists of terrorist organizations: a useful (but politically-suspect) tool

→ "One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter"
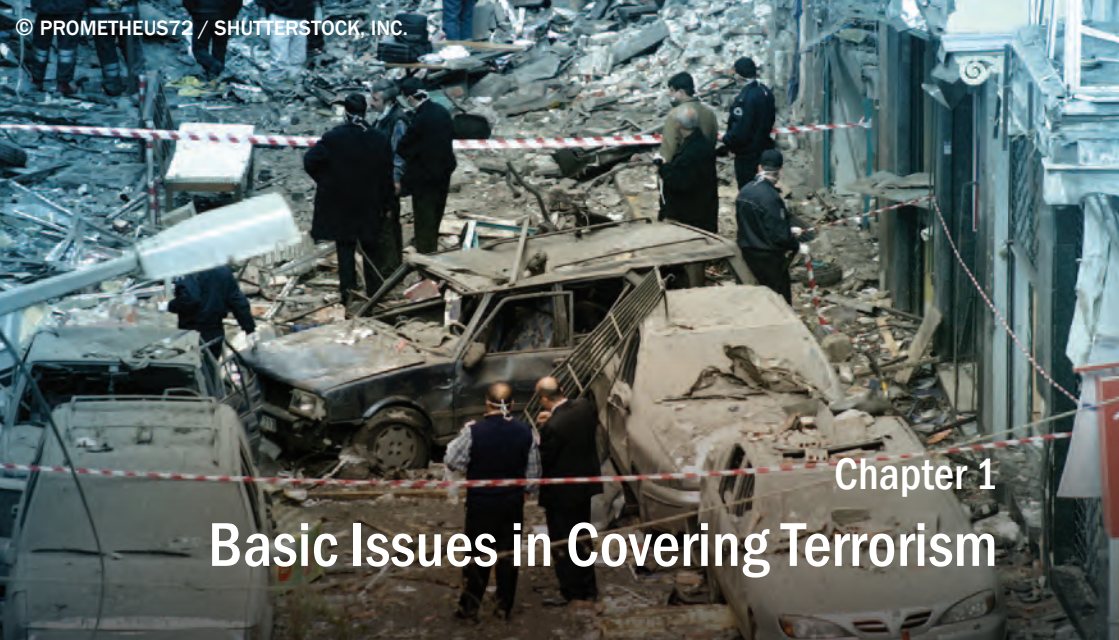
Chapter 1
Basic Issues in Covering Terrorism

These words have always been tricky; the subject of controversy. "One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter." "Today's terrorist is tomorrow's statesperson." These recurring phrases have become clichés in journalistic and political commentaries. They mean that using these terms is never neutral. Naming is, to a certain extent, choosing a side, at the risk of masking reality or accepting the interpretation that one of the newsmakers wishes to impose.

Terrorism is a catchall word. Does it refer to a tactic, or an ideology? Is it a crime, or an act of war? There are dozens of definitions of the word 'terrorism', which often emphasise specific points, reflecting a political or moral approach.

"A major hindrance in the way of achieving a widely-accepted definition of political terrorism is the negative emotional connotation of the term," wrote Ariel Merari, professor at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, Tel Aviv University. "Terrorism has become merely another derogatory word, rather than a descriptor of a specific type of activity. Usually, people use the term as a disapproving label for a whole variety of phenomena which they do not like, without bothering to define precisely what constitutes terroristic behavior."

Although the term comes up in many texts and conventions, there is currently no agreed upon definition within the United Nations (UN), despite the mission assigned in December 1996 to a special Committee established by the General Assembly. Set up in 2003, the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change submitted a report approaching a definition the following year. After bringing up the existing texts, particularly the Geneva Conventions condemning

war crimes and crimes against humanity and the 12 United Nations conventions against terrorism, it proposed to use the word 'terrorism' to refer to "any action [...] that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act".

It can be important to make a distinction between 'terrorism' and 'resistance', as the difference is so pervasive in the media and has led to so many positions and viewpoints. The fight against occupation is an essential point, but as the French political scientist Jacques Tarnero points out, "the choice of methods of combat and targets distinguishes resistance from terrorism."[1] In other words, a kamikaze attack targeting civilians, in the name of combating occupation, is not an act of resistance, but a terrorist crime.

> **"Any action [...] that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act."**

In this publication, as with media coverage generally, almost every word gives rise to contestation and debate. This is the case with the expression 'violent extremism', which is used more and more frequently and for which "there is no generally accepted definition", noted Ben Emmerson, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, in February 2016. The same is true of the term 'guerrilla', which is chosen by armed groups that the targeted State calls terrorists. *(See: Words, page 52)*

1.1 The notion of 'state terrorism'

Referring to something as 'state terrorism' very frequently gives rise to lively debate. To what extent can States that violate international humanitarian law be described as 'terrorist'? There are radically-opposed answers and often complete disagreement between those who denounce "acts of terrorism" when they emphasise the number of civilian deaths and those who justify their "proportional" use, although they admit it can cause "regrettable collateral damage".

State terrorism generally escapes the notice of those who try to forge a common international definition of terrorism within intergovernmental organiza-

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1   *Les Terrorismes*, Editions Milan, 1998

tions. And yet, the word 'terrorism' comes from the Reign of Terror perpetrated by Robespierre during the French Revolution, at the end of the 18th century.

Then, it referred to the State's brutal actions against its political enemies. When is it legitimate to speak of State terrorism? When, replies Gérard Chaliand, terror is used as a "way of governing, allowing the established power, through extreme measures and collective fear, to break those that resist it."[2]

Torture, forced disappearances, selective assassinations of opponents and widespread massacres are some of these extreme measures.

It may seem paradoxical, but this 'state terrorism' can even appear when fighting against terrorism or insurrections. Historical examples abound, each of which naturally often raises emotions, memories and debate.

Complexity is added when 'state terrorism' is practised within democratic governments. 'State terrorism' has been sometimes linked to the notion of the 'deep State', i.e. the network of security services, economic interests, political factions and even criminal groups acting in the shadows, behind the 'legal façade' of democracy, and aiming to shatter any change made by the established order, even if that means resorting to terrorist acts.

1.2   Avoiding glorification

Once again, these words present a challenge, because the media face laws that penalise the glorification of terrorism. When, though, can they be said to glorify terrorism?

The question is evident for the media considered close to "terrorist" organizations: do they unofficially cater to those organizations? What laws apply to these media, which have a disputed journalistic status? Some countries demand that they close down; others are content to monitor them and look out for content that could violate their laws.[3] The accusation of praising or glorifying terrorism can, however, drift, until even a legitimate, journalistic coverage of organizations described as 'terrorists' is criminalised, or the media are forbidden to reveal illegal State actions taken in the fight against terrorism.

1.3   Reporting on different forms of terrorism

The media (and political spheres) tend to concentrate, depending on the period, on certain forms of terrorism. From about 1960 to 1980, the news mainly covered terrorism linked to the extreme right and left and pro-independence movements. While such terrorism has not completely disappeared, today "religiously-inspired terrorism" attracts the most attention, and particularly attacks instigated by organizations claiming to follow Islam, which generate the widest media coverage.

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2   Encyclopedia Universalis, http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/terrorisme/
3   http://www.osce.org/fom/203926?download=true

Although many researchers and religious scholars analyse these equations and formulate often-contradictory theories on whether terrorism is founded on religion, the reference to Islam is strongly contested, not only within the Muslim community, but also by countries where Islam is the State religion. Thus, on 11 May 2016, during one of the meetings of the UN Security Council, the representative of Kuwait explained, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), that the expression "religiously inspired terrorist groups" was erroneous, as "no religion either condones or inspires terrorism", although there are "terrorist groups that exploit religions."[4]

International media also generally stress that these groups are engaged in a war against the West, but often fail to add that these violent actions often strike Muslim-dominant populations, either directly, as in Iraq and Syria, or indirectly, as was the case during the attacks in Brussels on 22 March 2016 and Nice on 14 July 2016, when there were also Muslims among the victims.

In the wake of an avalanche of attacks, references to Islam seem to pervade the media, as was seen following an attack in Munich in 2016 by a young German of Iranian origin. The mention of Iran misled news commentaries, with media once again focusing on Islam, whereas the crime was really committed because of an extreme right-wing ideology also rooted in the Aryan theories developed by certain Iranians and the culture of violence in Western societies, as the Iranian-American journalist Alex Shams pointed out.[5] In their studies and reports on terrorist risks, States and institutions take care not to limit themselves to religiously-inspired groups, and cover every threat. Thus, in its 2015 report, Europol also described extreme right-wing, anarchist and ethno-nationalist organizations.[6]

At a national level, the figures for extreme actions can differ from the global trend. In the United States, for example, since the attacks of 11 September 2001 and until 2015, the violent actions perpetrated by the supremacist or anti-government extreme right caused more deaths than those attributed to "Jihadists."[7] *(See: Words, page 52)*

Stressing these figures, representatives of the Muslim community question the standards and routines of information processing. They denounce the fact that extreme right-wing attacks are generally less widely covered by the media, and the motives of the perpetrators are depoliticised and often attributed to mental illness. Their white identity and religious beliefs (Christian) do not lead to all the members of their ethnic or religious community being considered terrorists.[8]

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4   http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.7690 p.61
5   http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alex-shams/why-did-the-munich-killer_b_11154486.html
6   https://www.europol.europa.eu/content/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2015
7   http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/25/us/tally-of-attacks-in-us-challenges-perceptions-of-top-terror-threat.html
8   http://mediamatters.org/blog/2015/11/30/the-planned-parenthood-attack-and-how-homegrown/207105

The Financial Times made the same remark when Jo Cox, the British Labour MP, was assassinated in June 2016, pointing out that the tabloids' "caution" as to the killer's possible links with the extreme right should apply to all cases of terrorist violence. The newspaper thus commented: "It is striking that both *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail*, two news organizations not widely known for their careful and understated coverage, have stressed that the alleged killer was a 'crazed loner' or a 'loner with a history of mental illness'."[9] Other groups, however, accuse "right-minded" or "politically correct" media of trying to acquit Islam of the acts committed by groups claiming to follow it. Monitored and suspected on all sides, the integrity of the press, tried by the attempt not to stereotype or generalise, is put to a hard test.

Cyberterrorism: This form of terrorism once again shows the importance of defining words. While one French dictionary, the *Larousse*, defines cyberterrorism as "all the serious, large-scale attacks (viruses, pirating, etc.) launched on the computers, networks and information systems of a company, an institution or a State, with the aim of provoking a general disruption susceptible of causing panic", others, such as the Council of Europe, apply the term to all the online practices of terrorist groups, including propaganda and recruitment. To avoid generalisation, more precise words have appeared, such as 'cyber jihad' or 'e-jihad' to refer to Al-Qaida or the Islamic State group's use of the Internet. *(See: Words, page 52, for more discussion of the appropriateness of these words)*

For some authors, whether an attack can be qualified as a 'cyber-terrorist' attack depends on its impact and motivation. As Alix Desforges remarks in one of the records published by France's Institute for Strategic Research of the Ministry of Defence (IRSEM), some specialists such as Dorothy Denning make a clear distinction between 'hacktivism' and cyberterrorism. **Hacktivism** covers "operations that use hacking techniques against a target's Internet site with the intent of disrupting normal operations but not causing serious damage".

Today, experts estimate that there is no great risk that terrorist organizations will use cyberterrorism to intimidate and seriously disrupt the functioning of a State or any of its strategic institutions or facilities. At this stage, they believe that such attacks are more likely to be government strategies. However, there is growing awareness as to the vulnerability of States and large companies and their dependence on information systems. The combination of a cyber-attack and a 'conventional' attack to disrupt the reaction of the security services and hospitals is particularly feared.

UN source: The Use of Internet for Terrorist Purposes[10]

Gangster terrorism: This expression, which refers to the co-existence of criminality and terrorism, is now mainly applied to the extremists who started out

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9   https://www.ft.com/content/5fd5a4e8-3480-11e6-ad39-3fee5ffe5b5b
10   http://www.unodc.org/documents/frontpage/Use_of_Internet_for_Terrorist_Purposes.pdf

as delinquents and to the hybridisation between criminal activities (arms, drug and human trafficking, money laundering, etc.) and terrorist activities. This term is sometimes used for the mafia, which violently attacked the Italian State, notably by assassinating the general Dalla Chiesa in 1982 and the judge Giovanni Falcone in 1992.

Narco-terrorism: This term refers to the direct involvement of armed, political groups in drug trafficking; the cooperation between criminal groups involved in drug trafficking and armed groups (guerrillas); the taxation of drugs by armed groups and terrorist acts committed by drug traffickers.

1.4 Lists of terrorist organizations

The UN does not maintain a global list of all terrorist organizations but instead relies upon specific lists such as the UN 1267 Sanctions Regime List, adopted by Resolution 1267 in 1999.

This list focuses on individuals and groups linked to Al-Qaida, the Taliban and their associates. Since 2011, the sanctions committee established by Resolution 1267 was subdivided to apply solely to Al-Qaida and its associates. Regime 1988 (2011), created the same year, applies specifically to the Taliban.

> **Experts estimate that there is no great risk that terrorist organizations will use cyberterrorism to intimidate and seriously disrupt the functioning of a State or any of its strategic institutions or facilities.**

In 2015, Resolution 2253 brought about the "List of Sanctions against ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida".[11]

These UN lists come under Chapter 7 of the Charter of the United Nations and the sanctions that they imply are thus binding for all Member States. The List related to sanctions against ISIL/Da'esh is managed by the sanctions committee, known as Committee 1267, which is composed of all fifteen members of the Security Council. These lists have consequences for the entities and individuals who are members of these groups, or considered as such (travel ban, bank-account freezes, assets freezes, etc.).

The inclusion criteria are, however, contested by some who criticise their politicisation and their arbitrariness. The UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (until 2011), Martin Scheinin, pointed out in particular the shortcomings of the UN lists.[12]

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11   https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list
12   http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/16session/A-HRC-16-51.pdf

Several individual countries, including the United States, France, Canada[13], India and China, and inter-governmental institutions, particularly the European Union (EU), also established lists of organizations that they considered terrorists. These lists reflect the approaches and priorities of the international policies set up by the countries and institutions. They also make it possible to explain the sanction and restriction policies followed.

The expression "terrorist State" is more frequent and designates States that use terrorism as an instrument of international influence. This term also stirs up debate, because actions that a State deems counter-terrorist can be denounced as terrorist actions by those who oppose them or suffer from them. However, it does reflect a reality in international politics. History is full of black files that evoke, without always being able to give conclusive evidence, the involvement of States in terrorist acts, thus fuelling the constant temptation of seeing behind every attack a "great coordinator" and masked conductor.

Sources:

UN Sanctions Committee List
https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/un-sc-consolidated-list#composition%20list

List of foreign terrorist organizations drawn up by the US Secretary of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism
http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm

List maintained by European Union
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/HTML/?uri=URISERV:l33208&from=FR http://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/policies/fight-against-terrorism/terrorist-list/

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13 http://www.securitepublique.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrt/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-fra.aspx

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Key points

→ Provide clear, precise, rapid and responsible information

→ Affirm the duty to inform

→ To explain is not to justify

→ Keep a critical distance

→ Take into account the impact of information on dignity and security

→ Be familiar: terrorism, counter-terrorism, laws

→ Carefully navigate relations with authorities

→ Control the "framing" of terrorism

→ Be wary of unsupported theories, peremptory judgements and pre-held biases

→ Evaluate anti-terrorism in the context of international human rights law

→ Avoid fostering fear

→ Adopt a pluralistic, balanced and inclusive vision of information

→ Consider terrorism, however targeted, as an attack against everyone

→ Think globally and avoid "information nationalism"

Media on the Front Lines

2.1   A reference point

During the first moments of a terrorist act, the media are often the first source of information for citizens, well before the public authorities are able to take up the communication.

Their mission is therefore essential: providing "clear, accurate, fast and responsible information"[1], in the words of Frank Sesno, a specialist from George Mason University, United States. The aim is to help citizens to ensure their safety, in tandem with or in parallel to the official services (police, crisis centre, etc.).

By their rigorous handling of information, their symbolic crisis management, their self-control, gravity and empathy, the media and especially TV news anchors and 'tweeters' can also reassure public opinion. Their tone and their choice of words and images not only help to avoid panic, but also prevent retaliation against individuals or groups linked in the minds of the public to the perpetrators of the attacks.

The press must act as a beacon of the media sphere. The proliferation of so-called 'citizen journalism' (with social networks, mobile phones and blogs) and the dawn of a continuous stream of information have made it an absolute necessity to check, filter and interpret these information flows, which circulate amidst a chaotic jumble of rumour, extrapolation, speculation and trolling.

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1   U.S. House of Representatives, *Combating Terrorism: The Role of the American Media*, September 15, 2004, p. 8.

Amidst the confusion and anguish that follow attacks, "acts of journalism", as defined by U.S. journalist and educator Josh Stearns, i.e. activities that uphold the professional and ethical principles of journalism, are decisive.[2]

2.2 Ethics and principles

Terrorism particularly puts the classical pillars of journalistic ethics to the test:

1. The pursuit of truth

An essential principle of journalism, the pursuit of truth is imperative in the context of terrorist attacks. Initially, confusion and speculation tend to reign. Consequently, the facts must be scrupulously established, and fuzzy journalism avoided. Fact-checking is also compulsory. The pursuit of truth also implies the right and the duty to explain, even though this is sometimes perceived or criticised as justifying terrorist acts. Daring to decode the 'reasons for unreason', the origins of terrorist acts and terrorist demands is, however, essential. The brutality of a violent act cannot serve as a pretext to refuse to analyse its causes.

One of the duties of journalism is to include complexity, refusing the denial of reality in the affirmation that "there is nothing to understand" on the pretext that terrorists are "barbarians, full stop." The essential rules of journalistic ethics cover this duty in the independent pursuit of truth. When she investigated terrorist groups in Mali in 2013, the *New York Times* journalist Rukmini Callimachi thus faced sharp criticism. She was asked: "How dare you give these people a voice? How dare you see them as anything other than the disgusting dogs they are?"

Her reply was: "The thing is, my reporting doesn't deny that they're perpetrating crimes against humanity, but I think that our job as journalists is to understand and to bring gray where there is only black and white. Because there's always gray."[3]

2. Independence

Terrorism tests the media's right to inform on events independently. During crises that threaten citizens' safety and compromise national security, people are strongly pressured to stand to attention. The call for patriotism, which tends to be as compelling as the attack was brutal, threatens at all times to merge with a call for censorship.

In some countries, the law gives the media a very small amount of leeway and severely limits their action. In a study on the coverage of terrorism in India and

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2   Acts of Journalism, 17 October 2013, https://www.freepress.net/resource/105079/acts-journalism-defining-press-freedom-digital-age

3   http://www.wired.com/2016/08/rukmini-callimachi-new-york-times-isis/

Sri Lanka, researchers Shakuntala Rao (State University of New York, Platts-burgh) and Pradeep N'Weerasinghe (University of Colombo, Sri Lanka) con-cluded that independence was indeed hindered. They particularly remarked upon reported "government manipulation of news, pressures to pander to the marketplace, pressure to please a public indoctrinated with governmental and corporate definitions of 'patriotism'" and "fear of physical reprisals."[4]

It is inevitable that the media identify with their community when it is targeted, especially in the initial aftermath of an attack, and refrain from asking ques-tions that could shatter national unity or upset victims. When there is a large-scale terrorist attack, the media tend to suspend their critical relationship with power. Emergencies create a kind of fusional journalism, if only so journalists do not cut themselves off from a public that is in a state of shock and in need of reassurance. This does not, however, mean becoming State reporters. As Brigitte L. Nacos wrote, "suspending the adversarial stance of normal times is one thing, to join the ranks of cheerleaders is another."[5]

The duty to inform requires that a critical distance be maintained between the media on one hand, and the reactions of the public, the declarations and ac-tions of the authorities and other information channels on the other, whether they are opposition political parties or associations and prominent figures in-volved in the public debate. Admittedly, such an approach is difficult, as the media run the risk of being accused by the public and the authorities of show-ing disloyalty in the face of the common threat. However, it preserves their integrity and, in the long run, their democratic function. After the initial shock of the attacks, the time comes for asking disturbing questions and wondering about the level of anticipation and preparation, and the effectiveness of the response and reprisals. Like other institutions, the media have a lawful right to take stock.

Should the media take a position against terrorism, choosing their side? Most journalists are repulsed by the use of violence against civilians, and their edito-rials mostly reflect their indignation. Nevertheless, this bias against terror must never lead to the violation of the fundamental values of journalism — particu-larly, the duty to serve the truth. Paul Wood, Middle East specialist for the BBC[6], noted that George Orwell chose his side during the Spanish Civil War, but "he would never have dreamed of changing the facts to suit his argument."

"A journalist's natural function," wrote the Colombian professor of journalistic ethics, Javier Dario Restrepo, "is to serve the population, not the authorities."[7]

4   Shakuntala Rao and Pradeep N'Weerasinghe. "Covering Terrorism: Examining Social Responsibility in South Asian Journalism" *Journalism Practice* Vol. 5 Iss. 4 (2011). Available at: http://works.bepress.com/shakuntala_rao/3/
5   *Terrorism & the Media*, p. 172.
6   Paul Wood, *The Pen and The Sword: Reporting ISIS*, Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard, July 2016, p. 15.
7   Javier Dario Restrepo, *El Zumbido y el Moscardon*, EFE/FNPI, 2004, p. 112.

This independence can be tried, by refusing first to disseminate information that is known to be false at the request of the authorities, and secondly to remain silent on actions carried out by State institutions and that go against the rule of law or international law, such as the practice of torture.

3. Responsibility to others

The media's actions inevitably have an impact on people, institutions, companies, etc., either by action or omission. The media thus balance their right and their duty to inform against their concern to minimise the negative impact of the dissemination of information on the dignity of the victims, particularly when protecting hostages or the safety of security-force operations. However, although journalistic ethics call for a 'feeling of humanity', this cannot compromise the essential function of journalism, which is to inform on subjects of public interest without being intimidated by the mood of the public or the orders of the authorities. There comes a time when questioning oneself about the consequences of informing can become an excessive self-censorship, to the detriment of citizens' right to know.

4. Transparency

Terrorism inevitably casts doubts on the media's editorial choices. Why, for example, publish a terrorist organization's press release, or images taken from a video of hostages being beheaded? *(See: Publishing terrorist propaganda, page 83)* Some media instantly and publicly explain their decisions, while others only give justifications if they are called into question.

This transparency implies that mistakes are corrected with the utmost speed, visibility and honesty. It can also manifest as a public post-mortem that analyses media coverage and identifies its mistakes and excesses. On 24 May 2004, for example, the *New York Times* published a report on its coverage of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, which clearly pointed out its shortcomings.[8] This transparency guarantees the long-term credibility of the media.

2.3 The duty of knowledge

"The media know how to cover a crisis, but they do not necessarily know the crisis they are covering." This saying emphasises the need to prepare journalists to cover a complex, tumultuous world, as the professor of journalism Philip Seib stressed in 2004 when referring to Iraq.

More than journalistic skills and techniques, the name of the game is knowing "the substance of the events and institutions that journalists must cover."[9]

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8   http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/26/world/from-the-editors-the-times-and-iraq.html
9   Philip Seib, *Beyond the Front Lines: How the News Media Cover a World Shaped by War*, Palgrave Macmilan, New York, 2004,

In most media, specialisation is far from the rule. Journalists skip from one subject to another and only furtively touch upon features of a rare complexity. Knowledge offers a guarantee against shortcuts, mistakes and extrapolations. When Oklahoma City, United States, was attacked on 19 April 1995, those who knew that it was the second anniversary of the tragedy that had played out in Waco, Texas — when dozens of members of the Branch Davidian sect were killed during an assault launched by U.S. security forces — were immediately able to put the assumed "Middle Eastern connection" into perspective. They could thus look to the extreme right, which had seen in the tragic event the very embodiment of the "toxicity of the American Federal State".

In 2008, Kyrgyzstan's Public Association of Journalists placed special emphasis on the need for specialisation. In its report, members wrote: "Journalists in Kyrgyzstan know little about political extremism and terrorism. In crisis situations, they often lack skills to tackle such issues. Therefore, they habitually reproduce official statements without looking for an opportunity to supplement these with their own investigations or third party analysis and comments."[10] This leads to creating incomprehension among the public and aggravating the situation rather than resolving it.

Covering terrorism also requires a profound knowledge of counter-terrorism. Numerous institutions, ministries, services and units are involved in counter-terrorism. They are tasked with missions and enjoy specific prerogatives. Counter-terrorism implies many specialisations and sophisticated surveillance and intervention techniques. It involves every power: the executive and judicial, but also the legislative, with the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) of Parliament and special investigation commissions.

Attempts to establish international, counter-terrorist cooperation are a further complication, as they involve institutions that are sometimes rarely or poorly covered, such as the UN, the Council of Europe, the EU, NATO or Interpol, whose mandates and skills often overlap or clash. Knowing about the counter-terrorist system is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of the fight against terrorism, but also its conformity with the law and the rule of law. Such knowledge also makes it easier to analyse peremptory declarations as to a State's readiness and judge the responses proposed by the government or the opposition with greater authority.

2.4   Facing the law

The right and duty to inform in the name of public interest do not exonerate the media from respecting a certain number of laws. The media must know the legislation in force in their own countries and in those where they send their reporters.

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10   Public Association "Journalists"/IMS, *Political extremism, terrorism and the media in Central Asia*, 2008, Bishek/Copenhagen.

Following an attack, the authorities can impose momentary bans on coverage for public order or national security. *(See: Live broadcasting, page 74)* These bans applied to the dissemination of information can have their reasons, but they can also be used to control information and protect the authorities from possible criticism.

Terrorism is a subject that is strictly regulated by the law because of the dangers it poses and its significant political sensitivity. Is it legal, for instance, to look at terrorist websites or attempt to contact the members of terrorist organizations? Can journalists film ongoing security service operations? To what extent can the media protect the secrecy of their sources, citing the freedom of the press, when police forces demand a source in the name of national security? What consequences does a state of emergency have for the media? The rules vary from one country to another, and the invocation of the freedom of the press may not be enough to save the media from the heavy hand of the law.

The law also permeates journalistic practice and routine. The general rejection elicited by violent extremism or the pressure to give information can lead media to lack caution in the way they refer to a person suspected of involvement in a terrorist act. They thus run the risk of forgetting the laws on the right to privacy and the right to be presumed innocent.

Each editorial decision implies rigorously assessing the legal risks entailed and bearing the potential consequences of certain acts. For instance, should media be ready to refuse to reveal the identity of a source and risk having one of its journalists or senior managers condemned to a prison sentence?

2.5   Relations with authorities

The media cannot accomplish their mission of general interest if they do not enjoy the freedom to inform. This freedom can be suspended for a certain time in specific cases where there are genuine security risks.

However, these restrictions can sometimes be excessive. In July 2016, for example, the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) asked the authorities to disclose more information on terrorism and counter-terrorist actions. The deputy CEO of the Council, Victor Bwire, said that the facts made public by the authorities were insufficient, which led journalists to seek information from the international press and social networks publishing content from terrorist websites. In the latter case, they could be accused of spreading propaganda.[11]

Journalists who cover terrorism, which involves national security and the reputation of the security forces and political authorities, are paid "particular attention" by the authorities. They run the risk of being placed under surveillance

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11   http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000206898/media-council-pushes-for-access-to-information-on-terrorism-cases

RIGHTS OF MEDIA IN A DEMOCRACY

In 2005, the day before World Press Freedom Day, the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) summed up the rights every democracy should grant the media:

1. **the right to access official information**, as defined in the 'right to know' legislation. Stricter security classifications can be imposed in matters regarding the military or sensitive intelligence, but they must be subject to rigorous examination so as to avoid unjustified attempts to limit public knowledge, particularly as regards political decisions;

2. **the right for journalists to protect their confidential sources**, and consequently, be protected from unreasonable searches and the monitoring of their communications without a court order;

3. **the right for journalists to cover all persons involved in conflicts**, including terrorists;

4. **the guarantee that journalists will not be prosecuted** in the event they publish classified information;

5. **the ban on 'black propaganda'**, i.e. the placement of falsified or malicious articles under the cover of journalism, and the authorities' renunciation to play journalists.

and prevented from conducting investigations in zones held by armed groups, and even being accused of complicity, or detained and convicted.

In 2014, the Nigerian journalist Peter Nkanga said that "Targeting a journalist for reporting on issues of public interest is tantamount to deliberately denying the public their right to be adequately informed about issues affecting their commonwealth. This is an attack on the society."[12] When terrorism strikes, journalists must, more than ever, continue to fulfil their roles of news providers and 'counterpowers'. They must not slavishly wait for official releases, but personally seek information and check its accuracy, while being attentive to their responsibilities before broadcasting it.

Relations with security and intelligence services must be clearly defined. Even though attacks can create a sort of 'sacred union' with authorities and the public calling for patriotism, the media are not government aides. They retain their task of monitoring the authorities and providing citizens with independent information.

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12   https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2014/06/nigeria-targeting-journalists-boko-haram/

In April 2016, James Rodgers, professor of journalism at City University, London, wondered: "How seriously should editors take warnings from 'anonymous security sources' about [terrorist] threats? Is this important public safety information, or spin aimed at securing extra funding?"[13]

This approach particularly implies testing the legitimacy of the authorities' claim that some information must remain secret. The bar of responsibility must obviously be placed very high to avoid playing into the hands of terrorists, but withholding information on the grounds it is a State secret or because of patriotism cannot be accepted if the aim is to cover up illegal or unreasonable actions undertaken by the authorities. The line between what must be silenced and what must be revealed to the public is not always clear, but the question must constantly be asked, and the authorities' arguments systematically scrutinised.

2.6 "Framing" terrorism

The "news frames" used to cover terrorism are decisive. News frames are "interpretive structures that journalists use to set particular events within their broader context", in the words of Pippa Norris, Montague Kern and Marian Just.[14]

Framing involves selecting particular aspects and angles of reality and privileging them in the description, the definition, the interpretation and the moral evaluation of the subject being covered.

The choice made by the media is not always a conscious one and can reflect news frames developed by others: the authorities, but also public figures, study centres, journalistic routines such as that of giving priority to proximity or to emotion, or an ideological bias. Nevertheless, the choice of the frame is crucial. It can influence the reactions of the public and the authorities. Authors Brooke Barnett and Amy Reynolds thus noted that, to a certain extent, the way the U.S. media framed the attacks of 11 September 2001 was to call for decisive retaliation.[15] The press widely quoted the declarations of politicians proposing a military response, as well as the declarations of ordinary Americans calling for reprisals.

During the Cold War, most terrorist acts were interpreted within the frame of the ideological and geopolitical confrontation between East and West. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the rise of 'Islam-inspired' terrorism *(See: Words, page 52)*, terrorist acts are often covered with a perspective similar to the "clash of civilisations" theory popularised by former Harvard professor, Samuel Huntington. In both cases, the model is very similar, inspired by a Manichean,

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13   http://www.city.ac.uk/news/2016/april/terror-attacks-put-journalists-ethics-on-the-front-line

14   *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government, and the Public*, Routledge, 2003, p. 10.

15   *Terrorism and the Press. An Uneasy Relationship*, p. 129.

binary conception of information: them vs. us, the 'bad guys' against the 'good guys'.

The same events can thus be framed in radically different ways according to the media's premises. While some sift through information to find what divides communities, others will choose the facts that demonstrate the need to live together, and the possibility of doing so. After 11 September, a certain number of American media published more positive articles on Arab American or Muslim citizens.[16] This frame aimed to avoid retaliation against a specific U.S. community and insisted on the urgency of rising to the challenge issued by Al-Qaida with the law, and not discrimination. It is essential to think about the frame, as journalists can thus go beyond the gregarious reflexes of journalism, its pre-established consensuses, the 'obvious' and the vote-catching stakes to offer different, plural, critical perspectives.[17]

> **While some sift through information to find what divides communities, others will choose the facts that demonstrate the need to live together, and the possibility of doing so.**

The way a terrorist act is framed can also change over time. After a certain time-lapse, when the shock of the attack has faded, the media abandon the cohesional or patriotic frame they had established and entertain a greater diversity of views and opinions. After the Paris attacks in November 2015, Chris Elliott, the former readers' editor for *The Guardian*, remarked that "The idea that these horrific attacks have causes and that one of those causes may be the West's policies is something that in the immediate aftermath might inspire anger. Three days later, it's a point of view that should be heard."[18]

The frame is expressed through the selection or rejection of subjects, their hierarchy, their placement, the choice of speakers and images. It can also be reflected in the use of some words and epithets. Comparing two attacks, one in Beirut on 12 November 2015, the other in Paris on 13 November 2015, the Lebanese-American journalist Nadine Ajaka showed how a few words were enough to set up a frame that can influence the public's feelings. News agencies described the attacks in Beirut as an attack against "a stronghold of Hezbollah, the Shiite militant group". By enveloping the area in a communitarian and geopolitical commentary and thus compacting its diverse identities, these news agencies implied, to a certain extent, that the crime was only to be expected, as the Lebanese Shiite militia is an enemy of the Islamic State. There

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16   Brigitte L. Nacos, Oscar Torres-Reyna, "Framing Muslim-Americans Before and After 9/11", in *Framing Terrorism*

17   http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/state/crs-terror-media.htm

18   https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/23/what-we-got-right-and-wrong-in-coverage-of-the-paris-attacks

was no such characterisation in the coverage of the Paris attacks, and the media only marginally referred to France's military interventions against the Islamic State group.[19]

"Framing" is also, more fundamentally, a philosophy of journalism. The renowned Latin-American specialist of journalistic ethics, Colombian professor Javier Dario Restrepo, offers an enlightening anecdote to that respect. "When he came to Bogotá, the most famous war correspondent in the world, Ryszard Kapuscinski, told a journalist that what he saw in war was tenderness, solidarity and tolerance, and that its characters were children, elderly people and pregnant women. He could have said, like many other correspondents, that you go to war to meet heroes, Rambos, people who like strength and cruelty. For the Polish journalist, however, war, which is the sewer of history and the scene where all reasons to believe in human beings expire, becomes a challenge when, like those who see the silver linings in clouds, you try to look at the humanity that remains and the reasons to keep believing in it."[20]

> "Ryszard Kapuscinski told a journalist that what he saw in war was tenderness, solidarity and tolerance, and that its characters were children, elderly people and pregnant women."

Similarly to much of the public and authorities, shocked after the attacks, some media are tempted to adopt a martial frame, to criticise the "Care Bears" and to promote "the most effective" ways to respond to the terrorist challenge. The risk is then to do away with what defines the ethics of a society and its commitment to human rights and international humanitarian law.

Gilles Bertrand and Mathias Delori wrote that "The war against 'terrorism' is supported by a humanist discourse that is, by definition, blind to its own violence. Communitarian or racist discourses are unique in that they noisily showcase the violence that they deplore. Inversely, 'modern', 'liberal' and 'humanist' discourse does not express its own violence."[21] This is surely something worth thinking about.

Framing inevitably has consequences on the professional and factual work of the media. It can, for instance, lead to neglecting civilian deaths provoked by a retaliation to terrorist acts, or to silencing abuses committed by one's own side, which raises questions of journalistic practice (equity, impartiality, truth) and humanist ethics (the feeling of humanity). In October 2001, in a memorandum transmitted to the editors, CNN, underlined that "given the enormity of the toll

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19   http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/11/paris-beirut-media-coverage/416457/
20   http://www.redalyc.org/pdf/160/16008104.pdf
21   *Terrorisme, émotions et relations internationales*, Myriapode, 2015, p. 74.

on innocent human lives in the US, we must remain careful not to focus excessively on the casualties and hardships in Afghanistan that will inevitably be a part of this war."[22]

It wasn't until 2004 that the U.S. press seriously started to inform readers on the use of torture in the U.S. prisons of Bagram or Abu Ghraib, although the practice had been denounced by human rights associations.[23]

The consequences of the drone war on Pakistan's civilian populations were also long under-covered, because the attacks were considered legitimate by media that were convinced of the necessity to harshly fight terrorist organizations. Journalist Tara McKelvey noted "When drones strike, key questions go unasked and unanswered."[24] While there are reasons for such framing, it cannot lead to deliberately partial forms of journalism.

Framing also involves explanations of the profound causes of terrorism. Journalists must be particularly wary of unequivocal theories and peremptory equations. Behind many explanations, sometimes backed by experts' opinions, are ideological biases that are so powerful that they prevent an independent approach to the event.

Is terrorism born from social misery? Is it the product of international interference? Which historical episodes inspire it? What is the actual role of religion? Is 'Jihadism' the consequence of the radicalisation of Islam, or, as the French researcher Olivier Roy believes, the result of the Islamisation of radicalism? *(See: Words, page 52)* The answers to these questions determine not only the media's editorial line, but also frequently the choices of journalistic coverage.

2.7 Guaranteeing the rule of law and human rights

The safety of citizens and their right to life is a fundamental human right, and States are obliged to take measures to ensure it. To do so, they can be exonerated from upholding certain rights and freedoms, temporarily and within strict limits.

However, the risk of an overreaction violating the international human rights law is constant. The restrictions placed on the freedom of expression can be excessive, surveillance measures disproportionate, searches and arrests arbitrary. The definition of a 'terrorist act' in particular can be abusively extended to criminalise legitimate opinions within a democratic society. In the fight against terrorism, international cooperation can also lead to perilous practices. For instance, how to work with the intelligence services of dictatorships without be-

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22   https://www.theguardian.com/media/2001/nov/01/warinafghanistan2001.september112001; Quoted in Susan Moeller, *Packaging Terrorism*, p. 5.
23   http://www.cjr.org/feature/failures_of_imagination.php.
24   http://www.cjr.org/feature/covering_obamas_secret_war.php

traying one's own principles? The press has not sufficiently covered these grey areas where, by dint of preaching realism in a world of brutes, democracies can at any time betray themselves.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights[25] and, particularly, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, a position held since August 2011 by lawyer Ben Emmerson, are precious references to evaluate the lawfulness of counter-terrorist measures and their conformity with the international human rights law. Local and international human rights associations such as Human Rights Watch,[26] Amnesty International,[27] the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)[28] and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)[29] have particularly well-developed monitoring of terrorism and counter-terrorism.

Some media also take on the mission of checking counter-terrorist measures against national laws and international human rights law. Thus, following the Paris attacks of 13 November 2015, the French newspaper *Le Monde* established an observatory to monitor the country's state of emergency.[30]

The fight against terrorism can violate citizens' equality before the law, a discrimination that is expressed, for instance, in ethnic profiling, appearance-based prejudice, etc. The attention paid to ethnic and religious profiling policies is all the more notable since many experts consider them to be ineffective. They can also create deep resentment in communities asked to cooperate with security forces.

2.8   Confronting fear

One of the aims of terrorism is to create fear and anguish, which can, in turn, lead citizens to ask for authoritarian measures to be adopted and place the collective blame of an attack on a specific community. This means playing into the terrorists' hands.

Terrorism attempts to expose "the hypocrisy of democracies" and polarise societies. Jessica Stern, from Harvard University, commented that "The whole aim of terrorism is to get us to overreact".

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25   http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Factsheet32EN.pdf; http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Pages/Home.aspx
26   https://www.hrw.org/topic/terrorism-counterterrorism,
27   http://www.amnesty.eu/en/news/press-releases/eu/human-rights-in-the-eu/human-rights-and-counter-terrorism/
28   https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/terrorism-surveillance-and-human-rights/fighting-terrorism-and-protecting-human-rights-analyses-from-fidh
29   http://www.icj.org/
30   http://delinquance.blog.lemonde.fr/2015/11/23/observons-letat-durgence/

As the United Nations agency responsible for "building peace in the minds of men and women", UNESCO is especially concerned by the ways in which the acts of a few at the extreme fringes of society can foster widespread resentment and suspicion towards much broader groups. Fear is one of the strongest, most visceral emotions there is, and can lead otherwise open and tolerant people down the road of prejudice and discrimination. This fear can be so powerful as to determine the outcome of elections and manifest itself in draconian policies targeted at some of the most vulnerable communities within society.

> **Fear is one of the strongest, most visceral emotions there is, and can lead otherwise open and tolerant people down the road of prejudice and discrimination.**

When covering terrorist acts, the tone is crucial for keeping the reactions within the population proportionate and preventing fear from dividing society. Mastering the flow of information and ensuring its truth and accuracy are journalistic practices that can prevent fear from turning into panic or paranoia. Media must remember that, although terrorism is unique in its ability to shock and scare, the actual level of risk for an individual citizen is relatively small, especially compared to countless other factors that may lack the same emotional impact.

Yet is it surprising that the average person watching wall-to-wall coverage of attacks day after day may become convinced that they are in immediate and pressing danger? The threat and the challenges that the authorities and society face must be apprised serenely, without giving in to exaggeration, sensationalism or the pressures from the part of the political world (or the financial bottom-line of media themselves) that benefits from feelings of insecurity and anguish.

2.9   Inclusive journalism

The media generally address a specific audience, defined by proximity, the market or a political, social, national or religious identity. They also tend to worry about "their" target audience first. Terrorism can claim adherence to a community, or target a specific community.

The media must strive to explain the particularities of attacks, but they can only do so if they are prepared to cover "the Other", and show themselves to be attentive to diversity.

This approach is not merely 'political'. It actually determines the quality of journalism. Only an 'inclusive journalism' can cultivate diverse sources of information, whether these are people, associations or institutions. This is essential to offer a pluralistic, balanced vision of breaking news. The ability to respond to

sudden events depends on the time taken to establish an editorial policy open to diversity. It consists of hiring journalists from all of society's communities, having many witnesses and experts on hand and covering communities as a matter of course rather than only seeking them out to inform on events that could reduce them to a group of culprits or victims.

The concern to inform on the diversity of communities should not, however, lead to an impasse of "tribal journalism", forgetting the threat that terrorism represents for society as a whole, and its common values. Commenting on the massacre in a gay night club in Orlando, United States, on 12 June 2016, *New York Times* columnist Frank Bruni remarked that "These locations are never random. [...] But let's be clear: This was no more an attack just on LGBT people than the bloodshed at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris was an attack solely on satirists. Both were attacks on freedom itself. Both took aim at societies that, at their best, integrate and celebrate diverse points of view, diverse systems of belief, diverse ways to love. And to speak of either massacre more narrowly than that is to miss the greater message, the more pervasive danger and the truest stakes."[31]

2.10 Thinking globally

Journalism has its laws. It also has its horizons, determined by geographic, social or cultural proximity. Every day, acts of terrorist violence slip under the radar-screen of international media; because they unfold in countries considered "unimportant", far from the global media platforms that focalise international attention; because they have become commonplace there or because they do not directly affect the citizens or interests of the most powerful countries.

However, although terrorism strikes a specific, local area, it almost always implies a global approach of information. Even though the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels claimed to adhere to the Islamic State group established in Syria and Iraq, they were neither so far away, nor from "elsewhere". They were actually just a stone's throw away in the neighbourhoods de Brussels, or in the wider suburbs of Paris. Connections must be established between the countries in which bombers or hostage-takers operate, those they come from, those of the victims they target and those of the States that fight them.

> **Every day, acts of terrorist violence slip under the radar-screen of international media, because they unfold in countries considered "unimportant".**

31 http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/13/opinion/the-scope-of-the-orlando-carnage.html?ref=opinion

Straits Times (Singapore) Deputy Editor Felix Soh remarked that "if you connect the terrorism dots, almost all of the Southeast Asian countries are linked. We are all in the same boat. But, the region's media have each gone their own way in covering conflict and terrorism. There is no holistic approach towards covering the scourge of terrorism that has gone from bad to worse."[32]

This remark also concerns the existence of national, ethnic or religious communities, which criss-cross the world through their diaspora. They are affected by the events that take place in their native and host countries. Some of their members may even support or, at the very least, condone the actions of violent organizations. Between homeland and land of exile, information travels through a global media space.

Terrorism operates amidst overlapping interests and imaginations. The world has become a "cosmopolis", wrote Timothy Garton Ash, professor at the University of Oxford, in *Free Speech*. He also noted "Thanks to electronic communication, what is published in Bradford [United Kingdom] will often be accessible in Lahore [Pakistan] and vice versa. If the norms for freedom of expression differ starkly between the two places – if, for example, it is normal to question Islam in one place and unacceptable in the other – then violent responses become more likely, in one country or both."[33]

The media must take an interest in these countries and regions, these "elsewheres" on the outskirts of the news cycles and breaking information. They seem very far off, and even insignificant, until the day an event, perhaps an attack, occurs to shatter the status quo. The question asked by journalist Roy Gutman, 1993 Pulitzer prize-winner, in his book *How We Missed The Story* illustrates how the absence of any substantive coverage in Afghanistan ("too far, too complicated") in the 1990s, after the Soviets were defeated, led to "missing" the rise of the Taliban and Al-Qaida, until the attacks on 11 September 2001. Likewise, for years, journalistic coverage of the emergence of the Islamic State/Daesh was very limited, and even inexistent, in the major international press. It thus appeared like a monster suddenly springing from a box, although it had been incubating for many years in the Sunni regions of Iraq. Joby Warrick notably showed this in his book, *The Rise of ISIS*[34], and Jason Burke in *The New Threat from Islamic Militancy*[35]. The links between the different spheres in which terrorist groups operate are also insufficiently mentioned. Libya, Nigeria and Syria are often covered as separate silos, whereas there are connections between them.

32   Felix Soh, "The End of Objectivity", in Shyam Tekwani (Ed.), *Media & Conflict Reporting in Asia*, Asian Media Information & Communication Centre (AMIC), 2008,p. 35.
33   Timothy Garton Ash, *Free Speech: Ten Principles for a Connected World*, Atlantic Books, London, 2016, p. 19.
34   Joby Warrick, Black Flags. *The Rise of ISIS*, Bantam Press, London, 2015.
35   Jason Burke, *The New Threat from Islamic Militancy*, The Bodley Head, London, 2015.

This increasingly close connection between the international scene and the interior scene is becoming even more complicated due to interconnected forms of violence. Terrorism rages at the crossroads of all criminality, trafficking and corruption. It feeds on the fragmentation of States under the pressure of a poorly-controlled globalisation and the rise of "sub-state" players.

A global approach, i.e. an approach that reflects the reality of an interconnected world, means going beyond merely factual coverage of terrorist attacks unfolding "far away". Even though journalism's proximity criterion has its legitimate laws, it is also important to take interest in the impact of terrorist attacks on these "remote" societies, in the human toll and the political repercussions, which is a given for attacks that are closer to home.

The global approach is thus justified by reason, with the new realities of the world. Could it also be justified by emotion? In its indignation over attacks perpetrated against civilian populations, journalism is often guided by the criterion of proximity, but is this attitude ethically and humanely acceptable? Christophe Ayad, Middle East expert for the French newspaper *Le Monde*, thus wondered: "Are the rules we set for Western hostages valid for Iraqi soldiers and civilians tormented by the Jihadists?"[36]

Why do the massacres perpetrated by Boko Haram in Nigeria and Northern Cameroon not provoke any real indignation in Europe? Only the kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls in Chibok in April 2014 mobilised the international community around the campaign #BringBackOurGirls. The other attacks, such as the one that caused the death of 2,000 people in Baga on the Chadian border in January 2015, were hardly covered compared to the attacks that took place at the same time in Paris. "I am Charlie, but I am Baga too," wrote the South-African journalist, Simon Allison, in the *Daily Maverick*, but he was unfortunately one of the only ones to do so.[37]

Similarly, why did the Paris attacks on 13 November 2015 attract so much attention when the 40 Lebanese victims of an explosion in Beirut the previous evening only merited a brief mention? On 14 November, the writer and podcaster Mohamed Ghilan tweeted "What is sadder? The #ParisAttacks or that the #BeirutAttacks didn't get more than a fraction of the attention that the world gave #Paris today?"[38]

Was it journalism following the principle of proximity, or gross negligence? Security, access and communication problems in zones controlled by armed groups — the north of Nigeria, for example — partly explain this disproportion in journalistic coverage, as well as the attitude of the local governments, some

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36   http://www.lemonde.fr/actualite-medias/article/2014/09/25/les-medias-face-a-l-etat-islamique_4494681_3236.html
37   http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-01-12-i-am-charlie-but-i-am-baga-too-on-nigerias-forgotten-massacre/
38   https://twitter.com/mohamedghilan/status/665410198878711810

of which choose not to raise too loud an outcry about acts perpetrated on their territory.[39] It is, however, difficult to justify such different levels of coverage.

Journalistic routines are very difficult to change, partly because of the attitude of the general public, which is to turn away in disinterest from countries "that are not like [them]", in the words of the Australian professor Folker Hanusch.[40] Another reason for such disinterest is that these countries do not exert any power over the international scene. "The audience must share the blame", added Folker Hanusch.

> **Thinking globally is thus crucial in the fight against terrorism. It is not only a matter of humanity and effectiveness, but also a matter of journalistic quality.**

This "nationalism of information", noted Michel Wieviorka and Dominique Wolton in their 1987 book *Terrorisme à la une*[41] ("Front-Page Terrorism"), this "weaker mobilisation of the public as soon as events do not directly affect their nationals or territory, is a barrier to the project to mobilise democracies against terrorism." Thinking globally is thus crucial in the fight against terrorism. It is not only a matter of humanity and effectiveness, but also a matter of journalistic quality: only this way can terrorism truly be measured.

And the function of journalism, to paraphrase British author George Orwell, is not to tell people want they want to hear, but to tell the truth, even if no-one wants to hear it.

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39   https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/12/-sp-boko-haram-attacks-nigeria-baga-ignored-media
40   http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/media/2015/11/disproportionate-coverage-paris-attacks-not-just-media-s-fault
41   Gallimard, 1987, p. 70.

3

Key points

→ Take care when broadcasting live

→ Take note of media blackouts during security operations

→ Source information and qualify informants

→ Correct any errors immediately and visibly

→ Be cautious about leaks and confidential sources

→ Explain why anonymity has been granted to a source

→ Make use of experts, but exercise caution

→ Keep a sense of proportion

→ Don't glamorise terrorists

→ Respect the dignity of victims, and particularly children

→ Don't use respect for privacy to justify obscuring the truth

→ Don't leave it to others to 'qualify' an act or group

→ Avoid a moralist ideological approach that blurs reality

→ Remember that not all words – jihadism, war – can be used objectively

→ Take figures and polls with a grain of salt

→ What to show and how? The balance between the duty to inform and respect for privacy

→ Publish essential images without resorting to sensationalism

→ Be careful publishing images of onlookers

→ Check the veracity of images before publishing

→ Avoid amalgams and generalisations

→ Control and deconstruct hate speech, rumours and conspiracy theories

Chapter 3
Ground Rules

3.1 The discipline of caution and doubt

Covering terrorism is a unique challenge for the media, because of the confusion and the anguish it causes, the thirst for real-time information it elicits, the political stakes involved and every player's wish to control the narrative.

Doubt and caution are accordingly a constant requirement. "Oh, just one more thing": the catchphrase of the hero of the well-known television series "Columbo" applies to the coverage of terrorism, because it lends itself to every shortcut and every ruse.

It could be said, as the professor and journalist Jeff Jarvis suggested at the time of the Boston Marathon attack on 15 April 2013 that the media should have a programme called "What We Do Not Know News."[1]

The *New York Times* adopted the phrase to cover the killings in Orlando on 12 June 2016 and the massacre in Nice on 14 July 2016, when they published articles entitled "Orlando Shooting: What We Know and Don't Know" and "Truck Attack in Nice, France: What We Know, and What We Don't".

When an attack takes place, the media go into emergency mode. They give priority to live broadcasting in a context dominated by uncertainty and news snippets, amidst a media environment that is increasingly taken up by social networks working overtime. The snares of rumours, disinformation and emotion

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1   http://buzzmachine.com/2013/04/22/and-now-the-news-heres-what-we-dont-know-at-this-hour/

are ever present. Twitter accounts publish photos of allegedly missing persons, announce inexistent abductions and disseminate unconfirmed claims. For the media, restraint is a crucial issue, because the impact of terrorism increases with such rumours and false news, distracting the police from urgent tasks and sparking confusion and fear within the population.

The practice of live blogging (publishing information online in real time) means a permanent risk of overreaction, even on the sites of traditional media. This mix of information gathered by the editorial team and other sources, along with reactions and comments, constantly pushes the media to the limit of the truth, even though some reassure themselves or justify their actions by saying that they can quickly correct a piece of information if it turns out to be incorrect. However, as Chris Elliott, *The Guardian*'s former Readers' Editor wrote, "'Never wrong for long' is not an appropriate maxim when millions of people are seeking reliable information in a fog of rumour and claim alongside counterclaim."[2]

It is essential to remain critical of other news players, and to be wary of oneself and one's own prejudices. Even pillars of the media and major news agencies can make mistakes. If a piece of information cannot be checked, it must be sourced and marked as such, by giving its origin and warning the public that it has not yet been confirmed. This rule also applies to 'conventional truths', preconceived ideas and widely accepted theories, such as the oversimplified theory that terrorism originates in discrimination or poverty.[3]

> **"'Never wrong for long' is not an appropriate maxim when millions of people are seeking reliable information in a fog of rumour and claim alongside counterclaim."**

Anne Speckhard, the author of *Talking to Terrorists*, gives an example. Her interviews with the families of terrorists show that, even if the parents of Palestinian suicide bombers declare that they are proud of their 'martyr' children in public, in private, they often express bitterness towards the organizations that recruited them and led them to commit suicide. "They celebrate in public, but privately are devastated", she wrote. [4]

Everything must be checked, weighed and justified. The famous adage of sceptical journalism, "If your mother says she loves you, check it out", applies now more than ever.

2   http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/23/what-we-got-right-and-wrong-in-coverage-of-the-paris-attacks

3   http://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/11/25/cinq-idees-recues-sur-l-islam-et-le-terrorisme_4817306_4355770.html

4   http://www.smh.com.au/comment/terrorists-the-word-from-inside-their-minds-20130725-2qn6y.html

When faced with a terrorist attack, the media's reflex is to try to name the perpetrator as quickly as possible. The risk is rushing into accusations that are founded on similarities with other attacks, the credulous acceptance of official theories and even prejudices. In many cases, media have extrapolated facts from insufficient clues and formulated theories that turned out to be false. In March 2012, after French soldiers of foreign origin were killed in Montauban, France, some media first privileged a far-right connection, whereas the perpetrator of the crimes, Mohamed Merah, claimed a radical Islamic view. Similarly, when Oklahoma City, United States, was attacked in 1995, many media immediately underlined the Arab connection, describing "two suspects of Middle Eastern appearance with dark hair and beards." The perpetrator, Timothy McVeigh, was actually white and belonged to the far right.[5] Some media even gave the names of four American-Arab "suspects", without carefully checking their information, despite the severity of the accusations.

The consequences of such a mistake can be disastrous for the persons and communities thus stigmatised. In the days following the Oklahoma City attack, Hamzi Moghrabi, chair of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, processed dozens of cases of harassment and threats towards people "of Arab appearance" throughout the U.S. Some media justified themselves declaring that they had only used the indications provided by investigators.[6] However, one source of error is excessive deference to the authorities, as if they knew the truth. During the Madrid attacks in 2004, the media first transmitted the Spanish government's position, accusing ETA. The assumption had its logic, as the separatist, armed Basque organization was still active. It should not, however, have eclipsed the other possibility, which was that Islamist extremists were behind the attack, as the Spanish government had backed the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Most media rushed to correct the mistake as soon as leads were confirmed, but the episode marked a fracture between journalists and the word of the State.

Journalists specialising in terrorism mainly rely on sources within the institutions and organizations concerned. For obvious reasons, these sources most frequently need to remain anonymous. However, they are rarely neutral or disinterested. The information they disclose can thus hold half-truths, or even lies in the service of political causes. In *Packaging Terrorism*, Susan Moeller, professor at the University of Maryland, gives a good summary of the dangers involved for journalism: "Media over-rely on official (and former official) sources for both breaking information and analysis – and do too little vetting and public disclosure of their conflicts of interest. They present the officials' statements as fact, too rarely offering independent discussion or confirmation of those statements. They often let officials speak anonymously."[7]

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5   http://ajrarchive.org/Article.asp?id=1980
6   http://ajrarchive.org/Article.asp?id=1980
7   Susan Moeller, op. cit., p. 61.

'Tips' and leaks must be taken with extreme circumspection, because they can be false. It is sometimes very tempting for media or individual journalists to give the impression that they are close to the police investigation teams. The downside is that they can serve as instruments for strategies and manoeuvres that are beyond them. The sphere of counter-terrorism complies with the demands of the realm of intelligence, and it is guided more by dissimulation and disinformation than by information ethics. This means it is more important than ever for journalists to have many, varied sources at their disposal, whether they are institutions, universities or civil society. They can thus check everything, especially the information that seems so striking and exclusive that they would love nothing better than to publish it.

Editorial teams should take certain precautions to reduce the risks posed by anonymous sources: the journalist should, in particular, justify this process to the chief editors, and explain to the public why the source wished to remain anonymous. Some media require that their journalist disclose the identity of the anonymous source to a superior among the editing staff.

After an attack, official declarations, condolences and expressions of grief or indignation must also be checked with the 'hypocrisy detector'. The Hispanic site, *Fusion*, did this following the attacks against Orlando's LGBT community in 2016, by reminding their readers of the discriminatory and stigmatising declarations made by anti-LGBT politicians suddenly desperate to exhibit their "compassion" for the victims.[8]

The same circumspection must be applied for experts. More even than for other subjects, the task of explaining and framing terrorism is regularly entrusted not to media editorial teams but external experts, in the form of interviews or opinion articles. These often bring a true wealth of information, but caution is still required. The media should be wary of the peremptory declarations of TV celebrities claiming to know and understand everything. Experts can make mistakes, because they are the prisoners of theories developed too far from the reality of the situation. They may also frame their input so as to promote a political agenda: theirs, that of the institution they work for, or that of the foundations, ministries or intelligence agencies, etc., that fund them. They can exaggerate the threat because their professional economic model depends on it.

It is thus crucial to check the quality and independence of their expertise. The media must specify the qualifications of these experts, the institution they belong to (left-wing or right-wing, linked to a university or a ministry, etc.), and ensure they lift any ambiguities in the questions that are set to them. It is thus essential for the media to question experts in a contradictory way, as they would other news players, witnesses, or politicians, and not treat them as scientists who know the truth and seem infallible and therefore incontestable.[9]

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8   http://fusion.net/story/3122969/Orlando-pulse-massacre-politicians-react-hypocrisy/

9   http://www.slate.fr/story/110375/faux-experts-terrorisme

Covering terrorist violence also requires keeping a sense of proportion. Reason must be the rule, in the volume of the journalistic coverage – too much information can cause just as much anxiety as too little information – in its "sound level" and in its portrayal of violence. The portrayal of violence is a media classic, fuelled by news programmes, but also by many films, TV series, and video games. "When it bleeds, it leads" is a common adage. The media practically go on auto-pilot, almost automatically contributing to the amplification of the terrorist impact, and even its exaggeration. They must be aware of this, and constantly assess their treatment of information to re-establish a sense of restraint and balance if necessary. *(See: Confronting fear, page 38)*

The media must learn to measure their "tone", not to feed the "noise machine", not to contribute to spreading anxiety or fueling anger and not to make the terrorism phenomenon or its players seem larger than they really are. More than ever, the public expects the media to be its anchors and save it from being sucked into the whirlwinds of news.

> **Too much information can cause just as much anxiety as too little information – in its "sound level" and in its portrayal of violence.**

Are terrorists really being viewed as stars, as some government officials sometimes denounce? Generally, the terms used to refer to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks are terms of condemnation and rejection: the media speak of killers, barbarians, monsters and assassins. However, a certain way of describing terrorists can also unconsciously indicate or elicit a kind of admiration. When we inconsiderately speak of the "mastermind" behind attacks, or of "sophisticated" attacks, are we not running the risk of glorifying the killers and presenting them as exceptional beings, asked National Public Radio (US).[10] *(See: Words, page 52)*

Some portraits of Ilich Ramírez Sánchez, known as "Carlos the Jackal", the Venezuelan terrorist involved in many attacks in the 1970s, Osama bin Laden, Anders Behring Breivik and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi have sometimes verged on fascination.[11]

When televisions played and replayed a video of one of the terrorists involved in the Paris attacks on 13 November 2015, crowing at the wheel of a 4x4 and dragging corpses that were victims of the Islamic State, did they not unconsciously fuel the sordid attraction of terrorism?[12] The titles of reports and books about terrorists also give an idea of the permanent risk of descending the 'slippery slope'. Media claim to be indignant at the inhumanity of the killers while

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10   http://www.wnyc.org/story/breaking-news-consumers-handbook-terrorism-edition/
11   http://www.wnyc.org/story/breaking-news-consumers-handbook-terrorism-edition/
12   http://www.francetvinfo.fr/faits-divers/terrorisme/attaques-du-13-novembre-a-paris/qui-est-abdelhamid-abaaoud-le-cerveau-presume-des-attentats-de-paris_1178553.html

exploiting it to excite the curiosity of the public or satisfy its "fascination for evil". One of the aims of terrorists is to project an image of power. When the media exaggerate the strategic sense of terrorist groups or emphasise their tactical skills for ideological reasons – to support police measures or condone an armed intervention – or, by sensationalism, magnify the severity of the threat, they inevitably become the providers of oxygen of which Margaret Thatcher spoke. The loudest journalists, experts or magistrates to denounce terrorism are sometimes those who reinforce its media power.

It is also very tempting and, at first glimpse, not as reprehensible, to praise to the skies people who embody counter-terrorism, working in the security services or the magistracy. Turning the "good guys" into celebrities sometimes consecrates remarkable figures, but there is a real risk of not respecting the critical distance that is essential to journalism.

3.2   Respect-based ethics

Covering terrorism requires respect-based ethics. Victims are at the core of journalistic coverage. Journalists rush towards the victims, to take photos of them and interview them.

This is part of the duty to inform, but it must be strictly regulated to ensure that the victims and their friends and family are respected, especially since most of the people caught up in an event as victims or witnesses do not know how the media work.

All too often, hordes of journalists race for traumatised people, jostle them, fire questions at them and select them according to their supposed role in the theatricalisation of suffering. All too often, they film the wounded and the dead aggressively and get far too close, like the journalists who, after the Lockerbie, Scotland, attack in 1988, lifted the sheets covering deceased persons to take photos of them.[13] All too often, they violate private lives. Was it necessary to play and replay the conversations recorded between the victims of the New York attacks of 11 September 2001 and the emergency services? Raphael Cohen-Almagor, founder and former Director of the Centre of Democratic Studies, University of Haifa, commented: "They exploited the suffering of the people trapped and soon to be dead inside the struck towers, playing again and again the emotional mayhem of people who were trying to cope amidst overwhelming horror, disbelief, fear, and terror. Those sensational broadcasters showed very little sensitivity to the victims in pursuit of better ratings."[14]

What are the ground rules that journalists should follow to both fulfil their duty to inform and respect victims' dignity and rights? They can depend on local contexts. In warring countries, for instance, the imperative of facilitating the

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13   Joan Deppa, *The Media and Disasters: Pan Am 103*, David Fulton Publishers, London, 1993.

14   http://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1579

BALANCING INFORMATION WITH HUMANITY

The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, an organization specialising in issues linked to the journalistic coverage of violence, published a series of guidelines that best combine the principles of information and humanity. It also called for the media to remember that victims have rights, including that of granting or refusing their "informed consent" to interviews or photos.

Here are the main points:

1. **Ask the victims' consent.** Victims have the right to refuse to be interviewed or filmed.

2. **Assess the state of shock** of the persons being interviewed: it is possible that they are not able to grant their "informed consent" and could feel manipulated.

3. **Do not aggravate the victims' state of shock.** Questions must be cautious and respectful. Photographers and camera operators in particular must ensure they do not violate the victims' privacy. Do not ask stupid questions such as "How do you feel?" – one of the first symptoms of an attack is a numbing of the senses.

4. In some countries, be **extremely attentive to local cultural codes**, particularly when interviewing women.

5. If victims refuse to give their testimony, **do not offer money to persuade them.** Interview the heads of humanitarian organizations for the information you need instead.

6. Think of the **impact of the photos of victims** and the testimonies of survivors on their families.

Source: http://dartcenter.org/content/working-with-victims-and-survivors

dissemination of information, especially for the families of the victims, can outweigh the respect of private life, and even death. In Iraq, after the car bombing in Karrada District in 2015, at least one television channel broadcast the official lists of the dead and wounded, which had been provided by a local hospital.[15]

The Dart Center has also published specific recommendations for interviewing children who are the victims or witnesses of violence. *(See also: Images of children, page 63)* These stress the necessity of seeking the informed consent of a parent or guardian, the caution needed when asking questions

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15   http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/150509151030459.html

and the utmost attention that must be paid to respecting the child's dignity and psychological state.[16]

However, these respect-based ethics should not become a pretext to withhold the truth. During the Lockerbie attack in Scotland in 1988, the relative of a family of victims was indignant at the intrusive and even violent behaviour of some journalists, who were filming people in tears or fainting from pain. They later confided: "It is very important to record these raw emotions, even if it's unpleasant for people who hold to their private life. During these moments, we are no longer private individuals and must forget our own ego for the good of all." This opinion may seem insensitive to some, but it questions ethics, which must not obstruct the duty to inform.

3.3   Victims: more than just names

After the attacks of 11 September 2001, the *New York Times* published por-traits and biographies of the victims. It was time to "break through the ab-straction". "Previous mass-death treatment was too telegraphic," declared Christine Kay, a *New York Times* Metro editor. "They had birth date, where they went to school... They weren't impressionistic."

"And impressionism," added journalist Roy Harris, "rather than obituary-style detail, was needed to help readers see these victims as real people."[17]

This presentation was adopted by French newspapers such as *Libération* after the Paris attacks on 13 November 2015 and *Le Soir* after the Brussels attacks on 22 March 2016. The idea is to give a face, a personality to the victim by eliciting a passion, a hobby or a philanthropic commitment that gave meaning to their lives.

"What if you focus on this one woman gardening, one man taking his daughter to ice-skating lessons, or maybe smoking cigars?" asked Christine Kay. In a subliminal way, this technique also makes everyone equal, human beings fac-ing suffering or death.

3.4   Words

It was stated in the first chapter that the terms 'terrorist' and 'terrorism' are almost always controversial. The main news agencies, media institutions and newspapers use these words sparingly, more frequently preferring to use con-crete terms like "bombers" or "attackers", to the great displeasure of govern-ments or the public, who want the "assassins" and "barbarians" to be de-nounced directly.[18]

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16   http://dartcenter.org/content/interviewing-children-guide-for-journalists
17   Roy Harris, *Pulitzer's Gold: A Century of Public Service Journalism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2016, p. 47.
18   http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2013/05/201352512137941940.html

For the media, as for the UN, the challenge is finding "the most objective" term, the least partisan possible, to describe a particular act or violent organization. Is a group defined by its actions or its ideology, its means or its ends? It is relatively easy to call any indiscriminate attacks against civilians or violent actions targeting State representatives (police officers, magistrates, soldiers, etc.) "terrorist" attacks. This was the case of the attacks perpetrated by the Red Brigades or the far right in Italy during the two decades – from the end of the 1960s to the end of the 1980s – that are known as the "Years of Lead". Or the attacks orchestrated by *Action Directe* (AD, or "Direct Action") in France, the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF, or "Red Army Faction") in West Germany, ETA in Spain and the IRA in the United Kingdom. The sarin gas attacks perpetrated by members of the *Aum Shinrikyo* sect in Tokyo, Japan, on 20 March 1995 are also considered terrorist attacks.

The Latin-American guerrilla movements in the 1970s and 1980s, however, are a different matter. Examples are the Uruguayan Tupamaro National Liberation Movement, denounced as a terrorist movement by the authorities while its members saw themselves as progressive militants fighting against dictatorial governments. How should we refer to political groups that resort to terrorist acts, i.e. acts targeting non-combatants, in situations of dictatorship or occupation?

Editorial teams have battled with the "terrorist" puzzle for years. While terrorist violence is unanimously rejected, this ethical position does not solve the terminological dilemma. "Some words have emotional resonance, or their definitions are highly debatable", says the Reuters handbook under "emotive words".

"Apocalyptic language is the language on which fundamentalism prospers."

What can be done? Charles Prestwich Scott, one of *The Guardian*'s former editors, coined the famous phrase "Facts are sacred, but comment is free", even though, ideally, comment is only respectable if it is founded on proven facts. It is legitimate for opinion articles and editorials to use the terms 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' freely, even to fuel controversy, if organizations resort to violent, indiscriminate actions. In the news, however, greater restraint is required, and the priority must be placed on describing an act rather than 'qualifying' it, often under the pressure of emotion, public opinion or the authorities.

There are two crucial criteria to using these terms:

- **Use them relevantly.** In an international scene dominated by crossed propaganda campaigns, there is a permanent temptation to exaggerate, bringing some to immediately qualify radical protests as "terrorist" acts.

- **Keep the mastery of words.** Media must faithfully take up, between inverted

commas or by giving the source, the term that is used by others (government, rebels, etc.), but they must not give others the privilege of defining a group or describing an action, whether they are armed groups, public authorities or "partisan associations". The journalist has a duty to be autonomous in his or her service of the truth. He or she must avoid being only the reporter or the messenger of interpretations forged by the players of current events, who are, by definition, partial. The journalist must "neutralise" and "objectify" declarations, particularly those expressed in interviews, by giving the facts, the figures and the data allowing the public to rationally judge the use of words. Susan Moeller, author of *Packaging Terrorism*[19], for instance, offers three criteria in her characterisation of terrorism: the deliberate targeting of civilians; the goal, beyond the victims, of affecting public opinion as broadly as possible and the intention to create a psychological impact that is greater than the physical damage caused. *(See: What is terrorism?, page 19)*

Moeller, a researcher for the University of Maryland, United States, specialises in the media's role in the international scene. She also warned against taking a mainly moral and ideological approach to terrorism by speaking of it as '**an axis of evil**', '**barbarity**' or '**abjection**'. She thus wrote: "When terrorists are talked about as a monolithic enemy rather than as distinctive actors looking to achieve specific political ends, when terrorists are portrayed as brainwashed religious fanatics not as rational political actors, terrorism seems inexplicable."[20] An emotional approach actually complicates the rational study of the phenomenon and thus risks leading to the adoption of ineffective measures. Furthermore, as British academic Jacqueline Rose noted, "Apocalyptic language is the language on which fundamentalism prospers."

> **Words largely choose their side, as when some speak of 'assassins' and others of 'martyrs', of an 'incursion' or an 'invasion', an 'attack' or 'reprisals'.**

The controversy extends to many more words than "terrorism", because words largely choose their side, as when some speak of '**assassins**' and others of '**martyrs**', of an '**incursion**' or an '**invasion**', an '**attack**' or '**reprisals**'. This "collateral language"[21] , which infiltrates any discussion on terrorism and the response chosen to oppose it, is constantly used by opposing sides to impose a partial vision of current events and intimidate the journalists who use the "wrong words". However, the media must use caution when they take up the words coined by terrorists or the authorities. These are coded words, whether

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19   Susan D. Moeller, *Packaging Terrorism: Co-opting the news for politics and profit*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2007, p. 18.

20   Susan D. Moeller, op. cit., p. 22.

21   *Collateral Language: A User's Guide to America's New War*, New York University Press, 2002.

they are '**revolutionary tax**', which is nothing less than an extortion, '**surgical strikes**', which tend to deny the impact of bombings on the civilian population, or '**enhanced interrogation techniques**', a synonym of torture. They must also be rigorous when using words as loaded as '**fundamentalism**' and '**genocide**', and prefer the rigorous explanation to the imperious statement.

Further controversy surrounded the designation of the '**Islamic State**', the movement established by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in Syria and Iraq, giving an idea of the semantic battlefield. France, for instance, pleaded for the exclusive use of the term '**Daesh**', the Arab acronym of 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant', *Dawlat islamiya fi 'iraq wa sham*.[22] Laurent Fabius, France's Foreign Minister, thus stated: "The terrorist group we're talking about isn't a state; it would like to be, but it's not, and to call it a state is to do it a favour. Likewise, I recommend not using the expression 'Islamic State', because it leads to confusion between 'Islam', 'Islamism' and 'Muslim'." In the Saudi newspaper *Riyadh*, Amjad Al Munif underlined the similar viewpoint of several other Arab-speaking media sources who denounced "semantic propaganda".[23] Furthermore, during an interview with *Al-Arabiya*, the Grand Mufti of Egypt noted that the group "is not a State but [...] terrorists", and that they "had nothing to do with Islam". He asked the media not to use the group's full name in Arabic, but rather to call it "the terrorist organization of Daesh".

For some, it is not only a matter of determining whether or not an organization should be characterised as 'terrorist', but denying it the right to name itself, as the name is a crucial element in a group's propaganda. This position is confirmed by the fact that the organization in question severely punishes those who call it the "wrong name", revealing the stakes of this battle of words and acronyms.

What is the right practice? All the players involved in terrorism have a keen awareness of the importance of words, to the extent that authorities have developed counter-message strategies. An example is the document published by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Words that work and words that don't: A guide for counterterrorism communication."[24] In its resolution of 19 December 2015 and in its sanctions list, the UN uses the acronym 'ISIL' (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), but adds "also known as Da'esh".

The media have the right to use any term they want, due to their freedom of expression and the definition of their editorial line, but is it not more journalistically logical to refer to an organization by the name it has given itself? In his book Jihad Academy, the journalist and former hostage Nicolas Hénin wrote:

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22   http://www.metronews.fr/info/Iraq-et-syrie-ne-dites-plus-etat-islamique-dites-daech/mnio!U1u1LnHQJYy2k/

23   http://www.alriyadh.com/1055386

24   http://www.investigativeproject.org/document/127-words-that-work-and-words-that-dont-a-guide-for

"I consider that I should not use any other name than the one it uses itself; I'd prefer to focus my critique on its actions and ideology rather than resort to anathema."[25]

The Associated Press (AP) agency has chosen the middle path by using the name 'Islamic State group' "to avoid phrasing that sounds like they could be fighting for an internationally recognised state."[26] *Agence France-Presse* (AFP) uses the expressions "the Islamic State organization", the "Islamic State group" or the "Jihadists of IS."[27] Others choose to speak of the "group known as Islamic State". And some try to avoid the issue by privileging the use of the acronym, IS, the way people refer to the ETA or the FARC, without feeling themselves obliged to write out the full name.

The same questions could be asked regarding the term '**Jihadist**' itself. This expression is increasingly used, if only to avoid using the expression 'Islamic terrorist', which some fear stigmatises Islam in its entirety, and not only those who claim to follow it to wage their war. But is that not playing into the hands of terrorists? Some believe it is. "Regarding jihad, even if it is accurate to reference the term [...], it may not be strategic, because it glamorises terrorism, imbues terrorists with religious authority they do not have", noted a memorandum of the U.S. Homeland Security department.[28]

Allie Kirchner, researcher for the Stimson Center, a research centre in Washington, commented, "Terrorists have exploited the word jihad to create the false impression that the text of the Quran supports their violent crimes." She further added: "By focusing on the narrow concept of jihad used by terrorists, the U.S. media has inadvertently reinforced the link between terrorism and Islam within the American consciousness and contributed to the negative perception of Islam held by an increasing percentage of the American public."[29]

> **"Strictly speaking, jihad means an inner spiritual struggle, not a holy war. It is not by tradition a negative term. It also means the struggle to defend Islam against things challenging it."**

Al Jazeera's style guide banishes the term: "Strictly speaking, *jihad* means an inner spiritual struggle, not a holy war. It is not by tradition a negative term. It also means the struggle to defend Islam against things challenging it."[30] The term is even more contested as it is

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25 Fayard, Paris, 2015, p. 9

26 https://blog.ap.org/announcements/now-we-say-the-islamic-state-group-instead-of-isil

27 http://bigbrowser.blog.lemonde.fr/2015/06/30/comment-designer-letat-islamique/

28 Cited in *Terrorism and the Press: an uneasy relationship.*

29 http://www.stimson.org/spotlight/losing-the-meaning-of-jihad-terrorism-and-the-us-media/

30 http://www.poynter.org/2015/al-jazeera-memo-illustrates-the-importance-of-word-choice/315683/

used, in counter-jihad expression, by some neo-conservative and even far-right groups who, behind a critique of terrorism, lead a more general campaign against Islam.

Similarly, should we speak of a '**war**' against terrorism? After the attacks of 11 September 2001, the Bush administration decreed a "war against terror". Then, after the Paris attacks of 13 November 2015, French President François Hollande spoke of a "war against terrorism". In both cases, commentators intervened to dispute the expression, either to polemicise, or, more rationally, by showing that the term was inappropriate. Peter Goldsmith, General Attorney of England and Wales from 2001 to 2007, said "If you talk about a people as engaged in a 'War on Terror', you risk not only dignifying their cause, you risk treating them as soldiers and not as criminals."

U.S. President Barack Obama also declared himself against this term and in 2009 advised against using it, preferring to refer to a "fight" against terrorism.[31] The testimony Dominique Faget from *Agence France-Presse* gave after the Paris attacks of 13 November 2015 gives an idea of the reticence of referring to terrorist actions as a "war": "Over the past few days I've heard a lot of people speak of 'scenes of war,' of 'a situation of war,' of 'war medicine.' But you have to put things in perspective. On Friday, November 13, we witnessed a series of terrorist attacks in Paris, blind massacres, the worst attacks the French capital

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31   http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/mar/25/obama-war-terror-overseas-contingency-operations

CONSIDERING WORDS

Roy Peter Clark from the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, St Petersburg, United States, summarises all these dilemmas in a list of questions:

1. What is the **literal meaning** of the questionable word or phrase?

2. Does that word or phrase have any **connotations**, that is, associations that are positive or negative?

3. How does the word correspond to **what is actually happening** on the ground?

4. What group (sometimes called a '**discourse community**') favours one locution over another, and why?

5. Is the **word or phrase 'loaded'**? How far does it steer us from neutral?

6. Does the word or phrase **help me see**, or does it **prevent me from seeing**?

Source: http://www.poynter.org/2015/al-jazeera-memo-illustrates-the-importance-of-word-choice/315683/

has seen since the liberation in World War II. But this is not a war. War - like what I covered in Lebanon, in Chad and more recently in eastern Ukraine - is to live in daily fear of death, to live on borrowed time, to not have security anywhere, anytime. It's to watch people falling around you every day, from bullets or shells that rain down on entire cities. It's to have dead bodies lying on the street, because people are too scared to go outside to take them away. War is when -- at any moment -- you risk finding yourself at the mercy of an isolated shooter or lunatic, those who run around without restraint in most of the world's conflict zones. War is when you can't count on the police to ensure security, when you see thousands of refugees on the roads. 'War medicine' is when you have to amputate in a hurry an extremity [a limb] that in normal circumstances would have been saved."

> **"This is not a war. War is to live in daily fear of death, to live on borrowed time, to not have security anywhere, anytime. It's to watch people falling around you every day, from bullets or shells that rain down on entire cities."**

What position should be adopted? Once again, editorial writers have the right to choose whether they call the fight against terrorism a "war" and whether they condone a country's communication policy. However, journalists must show more impartiality, either by attributing the expression to those who have chosen to use it, or by using inverted commas to show that it is the interpretation of a fact and not a fact that is generally accepted.

The important thing is to decode the term, particularly in the light of international law, and to indicate whether or not it is contained in a policy that mainly focuses on propaganda and a "battle of ideas". The journalist's role implies maintaining a critical distance from all speeches, official or not, and requires explaining to the public the meaning of the words that surround and reveal a policy.

3.5   Figures

Number of attacks per year, typology of the victims, assessment of counter-terrorist actions, percentage of terrorists in the population, proportion of acts according to the ideology or the religion of the perpetrators, etc. The study of terrorism abounds with figures.

And with reason, because figures help to guide the reflection on terrorism. Why, for instance, are the vast majority of terrorist attacks perpetrated by men? The attempt to answer this question sheds light on significant aspects of the context and motivations of radicalisation.

However, caution is required, because the collection of these figures often depends on the goals behind their dissemination. Figures frame the understanding of terrorism and significantly determine States' policies and the editorial positions of the media. Figures have consequences. The advocates of a hard fight against terrorism will tend to interpret attack statistics in an alarmist way, while those who fear a blow to freedom or a "clash of civilisations" will undoubtedly attempt to give a more understated perspective. Consequently, all numerical data must imperatively be checked, along with the methodology used to compile it. Its provenance, the period it concerns, who disseminated it and its purpose must also be underlined.

Figures are infinitely seductive. Peter Andreas and Kelly M. Greenhill, the authors and co-editors of *Sex, Drugs and Body Counts: The Politics of Numbers in Global Crime and Conflict*, thus wrote: "it is precisely because numbers are equated with science that they provide such a tempting and powerful political tool. [...] For the media and the broader public, this too often means accepting and regurgitating the claims rather than questioning and challenging them."[32] They add: "There are several straightforward questions that can and should be regularly posed when dealing with conflict-related statistics". These questions are: who came up with them? Why? How? For whom? According to the authors, figures should especially elicit uncompromising questions when the activity measured is secret, hidden and illicit. Their book contains a particularly enlightening chapter on combating the financing of terrorism, which shows the extreme fragility of advanced figures.

These reservations notwithstanding, it is incontestable that carefully gathered and interpreted figures are of real use in carrying out a serious informative work, and are a sort of "detox" for the media sphere, separating truth from lies and thus unraveling urban legends and preventing communities from being stigmatised. It is particularly important not to pick and choose figures based on one's own prejudices: isolating an accurate figure can be another way of skewing information. Choosing a period to show the evolution of the threat – the last three years, or over 50 years – is not neutral either. Such a choice can emphasise or, on the contrary, diminish the magnitude and significance of a form of terrorism.

Furthermore, figures do not say everything. Statistically smaller or less numerous attacks can have a far greater political and societal impact. The political scientist Arnaud Blin thus noted that "terrorism is defined by its psychological and emotional aspect, and that the perception of the facts and their impact is far greater than the raw data". To illustrate his point, he remarked that "a small bomb falling on a bungalow in Corsica, France, would not have the same emotional impact as the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre".[33]

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32   *Sex, Drugs, and Body Counts. The Politics of Numbers in Global Crime and Conflict*, p.264
33   http://www.atlantico.fr/decryptage/et-origine-terroristes-commettant-plus-attaques-dans-mondeest-alain-blin-1958758.html

The media must also resist the temptation to rush and rely too heavily on surveys, which often make up "degree zero" journalism. Unfiltered, they lend themselves to sensational or simplistic headlines. The media also too often refrain from reading the details of the survey and simply repeat the summaries. Who commissioned the survey? When was it carried out? On what sample of the population? What were the conditions of security and freedom? What questions were asked? Some institutions that carry out surveys are obviously more conscientious than others, but critical distance is a requisite in all circumstances – even when those who commissioned the survey are respectable intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations.[34]

3.6   Images

Images are at the core of terrorist acts. This was already true of plane hijackings, hostage situations and car-bomb attacks, even though terrorists had not mastered image recording or dissemination.

It is even more so today, now that terrorist groups have their own media such as *Inspire* (Al-Qaida) or *Dabiq* (Islamic State), technical teams, as well as social networks to disseminate their messages or stage their violent actions. Now that witnesses can publish a 'live stream' of attacks by using their smartphones and connecting to the main social networks, thus becoming "involuntary reporters", as *Agence France-Presse* has put it.[35]

Knowing how to "strike a balance between [the] duty to inform the public, [...] [the] concern for the dignity of victims being paraded by extremists, and the need to avoid being used as a vehicle for hateful, ultraviolent propaganda", in the words of Michèle Léridon, Global News Director at *Agence France-Presse*, has become a critical issue.[36]

The debate raged in France more fiercely than ever after the attacks that took place in Nice on 14 July 2016 and Saint-Étienne du Rouvray on 26 July 2016. The French newspaper *Le Monde*, which had already chosen not to publish photos or video clips disseminated by terrorists, decided to apply this rule to the photos of mass murderers to avoid the "posthumous glorification" of terrorists, as editorial director Jérôme Fenoglio announced.

This decision was then taken by other media, some of which went further by banishing any mention of the names of perpetrators. It was, however, contested. Michel Field, news director at *France Télévisions*, thus questioned: "Anonymous attacks, without names or faces? Nothing could better activate roving conspiracy theories or promote social anxiety, which already suspects the media of not saying everything or of wanting to silence the truth."

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34   http://journalistsresource.org/tip-sheets/research/statistics-for-journalists
35   https://correspondent.afp.com/involuntary-reporters
36   http://blogs.afp.com/makingof/?post/couvrir-l-etat-islamique-afp

These dilemmas are nothing new, but they have taken on a further dimension since the proliferation of the Internet and social networks. Not only the propagandists of terrorist organizations, but also web users who are little concerned about the most basic rules of journalistic ethics can operate with complete impunity. The *Columbia Journalism Review* thus opined that "the traditional media are no longer the sole arbiter of what should or should not be seen."[37]

Glorification can set in, and even become self-sufficient, first within the "jihadosphere". *(See: Words, page 52)* Cacophony and uncertainty prevail. "Nobody knows exactly where the line separating newsworthy from dangerous or overly disturbing content lies", noted the *Columbia Journalism Review*.[38]

For instance, was it right to disseminate the images of people falling from New York's Twin Towers on 11 September 2001? To publish scenes of hostages who have been beheaded, even just in short clips or photos? To disseminate video-surveillance images from the Parisian restaurant where a terrorist blew himself up on 13 November 2015?[39]

Lively controversy broke out when images were disseminated showing the execution of a policeman by one of the *Charlie Hebdo* attackers in Paris on 7 January 2015, and the execution of an unarmed security guard during the Westgate mall attack in Nairobi in September 2013.

Should victims' bodies be shown in general? The law often contains answers to these questions. When Claude Erignac, Prefect of Corsica (France), was assassinated in February 1998, France's justice system condemned media that had published a photo of his body lying on the pavement. In France, the dissemination of images showing victims is punishable by a €15,000 fine.[40]

The challenge is mainly ethical. The media's choice will thus vary according to their level of sensationalism and professionalism, but also their political line, and whether they attempt to conceal or magnify violence.

In other countries, situations can vary. After the Ben Gardane attack in Tunisia in March 2016, the Arabic-speaking online platform *Sasa News* claimed that Tunisian media were widely disseminating images of the bodies of victims and terrorists. Radhia Nasraoui, President of the Association for the Fight Against Torture in Tunisia (AFTT), criticised their conduct, stating that the dignity of the

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37   http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/to_publish_or_not_foley_video.php
38   http://www.cjr.org/behind_the_news/to_publish_or_not_foley_video.php
39   http://www.rtl.be/info/monde/france/m6-revele-la-video-de-l-explosion-de-brahim-ab-deslam-a-paris-de-nombreux-telespectateurs-sous-le-choc-813044.aspx
40   http://www.liberation.fr/france/2016/07/15/nice-apres-l-attaque-rumeurs-et-videos-choquantes-sur-les-reseaux-sociaux_1466284

dead, as well as that of detained persons, had to be respected, because of the lack of charges against them.[41]

However, the challenge is mainly ethical. The media's choice will thus vary according to their level of sensationalism and professionalism, but also their political line, and whether they attempt to conceal or magnify violence. In *Control Room* (2004), a documentary focusing on the media and particularly *Al Jazeera* during the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Egyptian-American producer Jehane Noujaim concluded that the Qatari channel had chosen to show an unfiltered vision of the war, without erasing graphic or bloody images.

On the contrary, U.S. channels mainly showed a "clean war" made up of "surgical" strikes and causing only "collateral damage."[42] In the case of terrorist acts, Paul Wood, a reputed BBC reporter, stated that the rules of "taste and decency" effectively "soften or sanitise – that is censor – the horror of the event."

How can the media find their way between all these practices and standards? How can they not play into the hands of terrorists, while not using these ethical or political considerations as pretexts to hide the truth? Some media may be tempted to "adapt" images by removing or blurring certain elements, but such a practice is inacceptable if it aims to mask elements that could "betray" reality, especially to guide the political interpretation of an image. This practice can, however, be justified if the goal is to mask or delete elements that could shock the public, compromise the dignity of the victims or afflict their friends and family.

The beheading of hostages by terrorist groups crystallised these debates within editorial teams. *Agence France-Presse* thus abstained from disseminating videos of beheadings. The agency's Global News Director Michèle Léridon wrote: "We released only a very small number of still images from those videos, and tried to ensure they were the least degrading towards the victims. [...] We also try to seek out and publish photos of the victim taken before their ordeal, to try to give them back some dignity in death."[43] Reuters published video stills on its Twitter accounts and posted an edited version of the video on its website, without the beheading or its aftermath. Their criterion? Deciding "whether the material is necessary to an understanding of the reality portrayed or described," states the agency's "Handbook of Journalism". In other words, whether it is newsworthy and serves public interest.

The *New York Times* chose to publish a medium black-and-white photo taken from an Islamic State video on an inside page of its print edition. The newspaper's editorial staff neither published the video online, nor included a link. Dean Baquet, the newspaper's executive editor, stated "There is no journalistic

41   http://www.sasapost.com/media_coverage_between_paris_and_tunis-attacks/
42   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3rMo5cgaXQ
43   http://blogs.afp.com/makingof/?post/couvrir-l-etat-islamique-afp

value to my mind of showing what a beheading looks like." While this was a cautious decision, even this was contested by Margaret Sullivan, the *Times*' public editor, who thought that "not using anything at all from this despicable video would have been even better."[44]

For *The Guardian*, the rules are clear: "Do not use the video and avoid pictures that glamorise the perpetrator – i.e. posing with the hostages or with weapons. Use audio sparingly. Only use a closely cropped still picture of the hostage(s) [...]. The main image should ideally be a picture of the hostage(s) in another context."[45]

Lastly, if televisions do decide to broadcast potentially shocking videos, they must warn their viewers and give them the time to change the channel or look away.

Images of children

Publishing images of children is generally subject to strict legal and ethical standards, especially when the images feature injured, traumatised or deceased children. In some countries, the images of children must be blurred.

The media regularly publish photos of child victims, believing that they reflect a reality from which we should not turn away. The photo taken of children's bodies lined up under blankets, faces uncovered, after the Ghouta attack in Syria in 2013 is one example of this, as is that of little Alan Kürdi, a young Syrian refugee, lying dead on a Turkish beach on 2 September 2015. While some Arabic-speaking media were astonished by the global reaction to this photo and chose to focus on the stirring of a global feeling of humanity and guilt, in Europe, its publication unleashed a lively debate within the media and the public. The French newspaper *Ouest-France* declared that it was publishing the photo because it opened the eyes and the conscience, but many readers said they were scandalised.[46]

> **Publishing images of children is generally subject to strict legal and ethical standards, especially when the images feature injured, traumatised or deceased children.**

Are there any alternatives? "Instead of using a photo of a dead child, for example, publishing a picture of a child's clothes covered with blood conveys the same message but is less upsetting," suggested the German journalist Simon Balzert.[47] There is, however, a limit to

44   http://publiceditor.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/09/03/should-the-times-have-observed-a-complete-blackout-on-isis-video-images/
45   http://www.imediaethics.org/guardians-3-guidelines-for-reporting-on-isis-murder-videos/
46   http://www.odi.media/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Billet-du-Mediateur-du-Monde-du-3-septembre.pdf
47   http://onmedia.dw-akademie.com/english/?p=9779

this avoidance policy. Belgium's Council of Journalistic Ethics noted that photos could have a significant informational content that took precedent over their potentially shocking character and justified their publication. For the Council, the horror resides in the existence of such scenes, and not in the fact they are shown.

The media should also wonder about the opportunity of publishing photos of children taken before the catastrophe, and acquired from the victim's loved ones or taken from social networks. More than the legal issues, the crux of the matter is arbitrating between the need to inform and the ethics of respect.

"Citizen" images

The media increasingly use photos taken by witnesses at the scene of a killing, or at the frontlines.[48]

In the minutes following an attack, photos taken by witnesses are posted on social networks. Very often, journalists hurry to contact their authors and ask if they can republish them. This can sometimes be taken very badly and seen as a "vulture-like" proceeding, especially as some witnesses are bombarded with a large number of requests, despite their stress levels.[49]

Agence France-Presse follows clear protocols concerning these "involuntary reporters": "The first thing we do is to ask if the person is safe. Then we ask if he or she is the author of the image online [...] and then we ask if we could use the image ourselves. Some media don't go through this process and publish whatever they find online," wrote Rémi Banet and Grégoire Lemarchand, heads of the AFP's social network unit, on 25 March 2016 following the Brussels attacks.[50]

Generally, the witnesses do not expect a financial compensation from the media that ask permission to use their photos. *Agence France-Presse* thus remarked "it's rare. Not one did it following the Brussels attack." However, some media sometimes offer these "news bystanders" money for exclusive images, despite the ethical reservations expressed. A British tabloid thus allegedly paid €50,000 for a video taken in one of the Parisian restaurants attacked on 13 November 2015.[51]

If such a transaction does take place, very strict criteria should be respected, and it should be ensured that it genuinely satisfies public interest and does not hinder justice. Moreover, the media should not offer money to acquire videos

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48   http://eyewitnessmediahub.com/uploads/browser/files/Final%20Press%20Study%20-%20eyewitness%20media%20hub.pdf
49   http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/academy/entries/dba0657a-fb54-4289-a0ad-6e33292ae7e0]
50   https://correspondent.afp.com/involuntary-reporters
51   http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/nov/24/daily-mail-cctv-video-paris-attack

produced by attackers. In some countries, such a transaction would represent a criminal offence, punishable by a prison sentence, because it is considered a contribution to terrorism financing.

The use of "citizen" images must be strictly regulated. First of all, this practice could incite simple citizens not only to risk their safety to have their photos disseminated in major media, but also to violate fundamental rules of journalistic ethics, particularly regarding the respect of victims. The media should add clear warnings to their requests in order to prevent such risks.

Next, extreme caution must be used when selecting images, as they may have been tweaked, fabricated or edited to manipulate information. Images must be sourced at all costs. Particular attention must be paid to the images circulating on social networks, or those sent by amateurs or militants who are not known to the editorial team.[52]

Techniques have been developed to check the authenticity of images, such as *Eyewitness Media Hub*'s Reveal project[53] and *First Draft News*' resources.[54]

They are based on a careful analysis of the place, the date and the techniques used, so as to detect incoherencies or reveal manipulations. Google also has a 'reverse image search' that allows users to find all the pages on which an image was published.

The same caution must be used for the images disseminated by agencies that take on occasional collaborators in zones entirely controlled by a terrorist organization. Such is the case of photos taken in Raqqa or Mosul by journalists who either work clandestinely or submit their work to censors of the Islamic State group. These photos must have clear captions, so as to warn the public.

3.7   Generalisations

Terrorist attacks often reveal the prejudices that reign among the media and society in general. These prejudices lie behind the temptation to disseminate without restraint rumours incriminating members of specific communities.

Such news shortcuts create risks of generalising, i.e. stigmatising or even criminalising the entire religious, ethnic, national or political group that terrorists claim to follow. In a study entitled "Tolerance and terror" that was published in 2014, the Media Council of Kenya noted that Kenyan journalists had partly contributed to spreading the dominant idea that people of Somalian descent were potential terrorists.

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52   http://observers.france24.com/fr/20151106-comment-verifier-images-reseaux-sociaux
53   https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/how-the-reveal-project-aims-to-help-journalists-verify-eyewitness-media/s2/a572616/
54   https://firstdraftnews.com/resource/test-your-verification-skills-with-our-observation-challenge/

Generalising is a very common temptation. "Islamist" terrorism is thus regularly attributed to the Islamic religion, despite its diversity of beliefs and practices, and to the entire Muslim population. However, no one dreams of accusing "Western civilisation" when an extremist claims to adhere to white supremacy, like the far-right Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik. This discordancy exposes the media to being accused of bias. It led the Arabic version of RT (*Russia Today)* to note that "We have not seen any experts specialising in the far-right being asked on TV how to combat this type of extremism and prevent it in the future."

The media must faithfully relate the reactions of the representatives and members of the communities that are suspected or threatened with popular vindictiveness. This implies giving them the appropriate amount of visibility, rather than making them news "footnotes". However, this desire to fight generalisation in the name of journalistic ethics implies also reporting expressions that seemingly condone attacks. In this case, it is crucial to check the accuracy of the alleged declarations or demonstrations of support for terrorist groups, their context and the number of people in the community who express them.

> **The media must faithfully relate the reactions of the representatives and members of the communities that are suspected or threatened with popular vindictiveness.**

One of the ways to protect oneself from generalising is covering society in all its diversity and complexity – and not only when there are shocking or dramatic events such as attacks. The knowledge acquired after regular contact with different communities enables the media to give a more representative image of the diverse components of society, rather than blaming an entire community for actions committed by some of its members.

Some States generalise when they consider those who peacefully defend their ideals, such as the respect of their cultural rights or territorial autonomy, to be terrorists because of the presence of armed groups fighting for the same reasons. Intellectually and politically advocating for secession or autonomy is enshrined in freedom of expression and cannot be confused with the justification of terrorist acts committed by violent, separatist organizations.

Admittedly, it is sometimes difficult to establish clear boundaries between terrorist groups and other persons or groups who intellectually or politically share some of their ideals, especially since some movements and political parties are the legal or semi-legal "showcases" of armed groups. Once again, however, journalists must be careful not to automatically adopt the viewpoint of the authorities or the dominant population. It is up to them to carry out an investiga-

tion and validate the information on the groups allegedly serving as façades or acting as satellites for illegal armed groups.

3.8   Hate speech

One of the media's challenges is undoubtedly mastering hate speech and the hateful acts that are unleashed in the aftermath of attacks. The media cannot hush them up as if they could stop the contagion by doing so.

This form of censorship is counter-productive and in any case, silence does not long resist the pressure of social networks. The media must, on the contrary, help the public to gain an idea of the discussions circulating within the sphere of opinion. Their role is also to analyse them, qualify them and deconstruct them. Particular attention must be paid to forums and 'letters from the readers', as these very often contain the most brutal forms of racism and prejudice. The media should set up moderation systems founded on their principles and values, journalistic ethics and international laws, so as to prevent the freedom of expression and diversity of opinions from becoming pretexts to incitement to discrimination and violence.

"Counter-speech is generally preferable to suppression of speech. And any response that limits speech needs to be very carefully weighed to ensure that this remains wholly exceptional, and that legitimate robust debate is not curtailed."

The media must, however, consider calls to fight hate speech with a critical perspective. Once again, words are controversial and the international community remains divided on what can actually be construed as hate speech and its counter-measures. Moreover, in authoritarian regimes and even in democratic countries where the press is subjected to campaigns led by well-organised groups, the accusation of spreading hate speech can be invoked abusively to censure the expression of legitimate ideas. As a UNESCO report on online hate speech points out, "Counter-speech is generally preferable to suppression of speech. And any response that limits speech needs to be very carefully weighed to ensure that this remains wholly exceptional, and that legitimate robust debate is not curtailed."[55]

3.9   Rumours

Terrorist attacks inevitably provoke rumours, especially as information is difficult to come by, fear agitates public opinion and the media are caught up in the constraints of time and competition.

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55   http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002332/233231e.pdf

It is all the more tempting to relay hoaxes and speculation when they seem to confirm prejudice or stereotypes. After the Paris attacks on 13 November 2015, *Le Monde* noted that to inform was also to disprove rumours[56], because their effects, amplified by social networks, can be catastrophic. They can fuel fear and panic, stigmatise communities, slander individuals and give a false idea of reality.

The media must set up a monitoring team tasked with tracking and deconstructing rumours.[57] They must also ensure that their teams use great caution when retransmitting, and especially re-tweeting, unconfirmed information. When a prestigious media channel re-tweets something, the public sees it as proof. "Achieving due accuracy is more important than speed", notes the BBC in its editorial guidelines.

The fight against rumours also more broadly applies to conspiracy theories, which predictably follow serious attacks.[58] Fantasists build theories by selecting snippets of information, detecting "troubling details" in photos, manipulating declarations or exposing "suspicious coincidences". These contribute to polluting information flows when they are endlessly repeated and widely disseminated on social networks. The media should take pains to deconstruct them, because they risk not only creating a smokescreen between the news and the public, but also making it easier to generalise and stigmatise.

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56   http://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/11/20/informer-c-est-aussi-dementir-les-rumeurs_4813894_4355770.html
57   https://medium.com/1st-draft/a-crash-course-in-verification-and-misinformation-from-the-boston-marathon-bombing-5f599e6c4476
58   http://www.conspiracywatch.info/Theories-du-complot-pour-bien-commencer_a1.html

People protest against terrorism in Milan, Italy in November 2015.

4

Key points

→ Provide emergency assistance to victims

→ Ensure your own security

→ Don't hinder emergency services

→ Agree on clear rules for the use of live broadcasting, images, social media etc.

→ Assume that terrorist groups have access to the information you broadcast

→ Don't interview terrorists or hostages

→ Don't describe tactics or strategies of security forces

Chapter 4
Covering an Attack

4.1   Initial confusion

Journalists are often among the 'first responders', i.e. those who are the first to arrive at the scene of an attack. There, they are faced with major ethical and professional challenges in emergency conditions.

Which side should come into play first: journalist or rescuer? Should they help the victims, or hurry to take photos of them in their suffering?

Agence France-Presse's Editorial Standards and Best Practices note: "Although we are deployed on the ground to provide news coverage we do not surrender our humanity. [...] it is a consensus that the journalist has an obligation to assist when an innocent person's life is in danger and no one other than the journalist can help."

The Dart Center gives the following advice: "Realise that victims may be in shock or severely injured when you first approach them. Calmly introduce yourself and then ask whether they need any medical help. If they do, seek medical help immediately."[1] In Pakistan, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) even held training sessions to provide journalists with basic first-aid skills (staunching bleeding, performing a cardiac massage, etc.) so they could help when they were the first to arrive at the scene of an attack.[2]

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1   http://dartcenter.org/content/first-responders
2   https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2010/pakistan-news-270710.htm

The media must also think of the safety of their reporters at the scene *(See: Safety of Journalists, page 91).* The perpetrators of terrorist acts may still be there, 'secondary' attacks may be planned, weakened walls could crumble, etc. The media must prepare their teams for this kind of danger and equip them correctly. The Kenyan journalist Osman Mohamed Osman commented on the *Sahan Journal*'s website on 5 April 2015 that the journalists who had been sent to the scene of the Westgate mall attack in Nairobi in September 2013 "were not wearing protective gears, a grievous mistake that could have turned fatal."[3]

The Kenyan expert John Gachie added that many of them "were conspicuous by their haste to court danger; tempt fate, grand-stand and hog the limelight. It was by fate that none of the journalists was injured – it was a miracle."[4]

The Dart Center has published a series of invaluable recommendations on the procedures that should be followed, not only to protect journalists but also to inform them how to act around emergency services and victims.[5] Journalists should particularly make sure they do not prevent rescuers from doing their job by coming between them and the victims, setting out cumbersome technical equipment or monopolising the communications networks.

From the first seconds of an attack, journalists must give information as rigorously and as quickly as possible to ensure the safety of citizens, the effectiveness of emergency services and the collective understanding of the event. It is, however, difficult to escape the confusion.

Regarding the Paris attacks of 13 November 2015, *Agence France-Presse* photographer, Dominique Faget, wrote: "My editor tells me that there have been shots fired in [Paris's] 10th arrondissement. For the moment, that's all we know. [...] People are running in all directions, but we don't yet know why. [...] All of the sudden I am pushed by the police along with a group of passersby into a restaurant."[6]

4.2   Preparation

Improvisation is a major risk that the media can partly prevent by establishing procedures before attacks. These must hold up against the chaos that terrorist acts generate by their suddenness and brutality.

In the aftermath of an attack in Tunisia on 16 July 2014, the French-Tunisian journalist Lilia Blaise commented on the ensuing precipitation, lack of information, erroneous figures, lack of reaction and lack of preparation for a news flash

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3   http://sahanjournal.com/garissaattack-kenyan-media-covers-terrorist-attacks/#.WF6RN_kr-LIX
4   https://issuu.com/mediacouncilkenya/docs/media_observer_magazine_october-dec [p.21]
5   http://dartcenter.org/content/first-responders
6   http://blogs.afp.com/makingof/?post/Guerre-et-guerre

during primetime viewing. She noted that, between the lack of communication from the authorities and the poor handling of information, some media seemed to have been overwhelmed by the events.[7]

How can a team that is generally divided between several isolated services, e.g. domestic policy, foreign policy, civil society, etc., be brought together? How should reporters be sent to the field? How can the media establish an internal verification and moderation system for information to avoid as many rumours and extrapolations as possible? What experts can they contact? Such mobilisation cannot be improvised. It implies defining roles and tasks, formulating specific editorial and ethical rules, setting up precise instructions and establishing back-up solutions. Anything less is too little too late. In a textbook published by Deborah Potter and Sherry Ricchiardi in 2007, the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) made a list of the steps to take before a crisis event happens, and how to be prepared to react at any time[8], which can serve as a roadmap for the media.

It is essential to have solid contacts within the security and emergency services. During the Boston Marathon Attack in the United States in 2013, the local newspaper, *The Boston Globe*, was one of the most reliable sources because it had developed contacts with frontline services at the right time and its journalists knew their strengths and weaknesses. They must also have defined the way to process current events. Having a clear set of fundamental ethics rules (on the use of images, interview rules, respecting the secrecy of security operations, etc.) is decisive. Every member of the editorial team should be aware of them so that they can immediately act in accordance with the media's editorial line. The risk of blunders increases when, in the first moments of an attack, the editorial teams are incomplete because it is the evening, a weekend or a holiday, or they are relying on interns or temporary staff. Reading from a common book of rules is crucial.

Emergencies must also be "domesticated" by planning precise policies on sending out reporters, the chain of command within the editorial team and live coverage. It is crucial to have an experienced news director decide what will or will not be disseminated and in what way.Jeremy Stahl, a journalist for *Slate*, gives an example of lines of conduct regarding the management of social networks: "First, media outlets need to turn off their automated Twitter feeds to ensure that frivolous and/or off-topic items don't get sent out by mistake [...], do not pass on speculation. [...] Don't shame people on Twitter for passing on speculation. Because of the nature of breaking news, factual mistakes will be made and everyone will make them [...] don't rely on people who've heard something on police scanners – a notoriously unreliable source if you're looking for solid, confirmed information."[9]

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7   https://inkyfada.com/2014/07/media-terrorisme-tunisie-deontologie/
8   http://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/Disaster_Crisis.pdf
9   http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/04/boston_marathon_bombing_all_the_mistakes_journalists_make_during_a_crisis.html

4.3   Live broadcasting

During attacks, the media very often go "live", a practice that satisfies an urgent need for information, but that also contributes to the inherent dramatisation of the coverage of exceptional events, especially in audiovisual media.

In some countries, the authorities set up news embargoes and ban live broadcasting at the scene of an attack. Officially, this is to protect lives and facilitate police operations, but some governments also resort to this measure to control communications and "frame" the narrative. In 2015, India's government added a clause to its program code banning the "live coverage of anti-terrorist operations by security forces."[10] India's broadcasting union, the News Broadcasters Association (NBA), had already changed its code of ethics following the criticism levelled at the media after the Mumbai attack in 2008.[11]

In spite of this, in the last few years, many of the most emblematic terrorist acts have been covered live and immediately broadcast, not only by the media, but also social networks. In February 2014, the chief of Kenya's defence forces, Julius Karangi, said before a crowd of journalists that he regretted that, during the attack on Westgate mall, Nairobi, in 2013, the media had covered the event live, allowing the attackers to "monitor activities that the government security forces were planning."[12] Strict rules are needed: do not endanger people, do not hinder emergency and security operations, do not provide terrorists with crucial information.

> **Strict rules are needed: do not endanger people, do not hinder emergency and security operations, do not provide terrorists with crucial information.**

During the operation that was launched on 9 January 2015 after the attack targeting the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, several audiovisual media broadcast a local politician's announcement that there was a person hiding in the printing firm where the perpetrators of the massacre had taken cover.[13] The same day, a French television channel had made the same mistake when it broadcast an announcement that someone was allegedly hiding in the cold room of the Parisian 'HyperCacher' shop where people were still being held hostage. During these January 2015 attacks, despite terrorists being still holed up, some television channels also broadcast information and images showing the deployment of security forces, including

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10   http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Centre-bans-live-coverage-of-anti-terror-operations/articleshow/46670046.cms

11   http://nbanewdelhi.com/pdf/final/NBA_code-of-ethics_english.pdf

12   http://www.coastweek.com/3706-latest-news-kenya-forum-reviews-role-of-media-amid-increasing-militant-attacks.htm

13   https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/09/charlie-hebdo-attack-suspects-gunman-killed-dammartin-en-goele-port-de-vincennes-paris

the exact position of some of them, and the overall strategy used. Criminal investigations were opened to look into these incidents, which were condemned by the *Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel* (CSA, or "High Audiovisual Council"), France's regulatory body.

Similarly, on 18 March 2016 in Brussels, a television channel placed a broadcast vehicle next to a house where one of the perpetrators of the attacks of 13 November 2015 was hiding before the security forces had even arrived. This angered the Director of the judicial police, who stated that the safety of his staff and the public had been offered up on the altar of ratings.[14]

Informing the public becomes even more complicated when simple citizens, neighbours and bystanders film the scene and freely publish videos or information on social networks, thus circumventing the rules set up for journalists and confronting traditional media with serious ethical dilemmas. The media cannot ignore these information flows, but they must view them critically. The blunders of "news amateurs" do not exonerate the professionals from the principles of caution they must uphold.

What can be done? On 22 November 2015, "at the invitation" of the security forces, the Belgian media observed "radio silence" (i.e. a news blackout) during an operation that took place in the neighbourhoods of Brussels and Charleroi to track persons involved in the Paris attacks of 13 November. Christophe Berti, the senior editor of *Le Soir*, a Brussels newspaper, said that he had received two calls asking him not to give the precise names of the neighbourhoods where the operations were to take place. His editorial staff decided that not giving the name of the street or the house number where the police forces would be working could not be considered disinformation.[15]

Likewise, television channels took a series of measures to avoid any blunders. Jean-Pierre Jacqmin, news director for *Radio Télévision Belge Francophone* (RTBF, the public broadcasting organization of French-speaking Belgium) explained that when cameramen film in the street, they zoom in on the journalist's face so as not provide any details on the location and tactics of the intervention forces. However, for both Christophe Berti and Jean-Pierre Jacqmin, such restraint must be temporary and clearly explained to the public. Christophe Berti thus stated that his team had continued to work and investigate, and that the next day, they had submitted 20 pages on the story.

In other cases, media have set up a few minutes' delay between field-reporting and broadcasting so that experienced editors could view the coverage and decide what could be broadcast and what would be blurred. This was the choice

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14   http://www.lemonde.fr/attaques-a-paris/article/2016/03/21/arrestation-de-salah-abdeslam-la-police-belge-condamne-le-comportement-de-certains-medias_4886784_4809495.html
15   http://www.lemonde.fr/actualite-medias/article/2015/11/23/les-medias-belges-en-mode-chaton-pendant-l-intervention-de-la-police_4815820_3236.html

WHAT TO DO IN A HOSTAGE SITUATION?

How should the media ensure a coverage of hostage situations that is "complete", "unobtrusive" and "noninflammatory", as the U.S. Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism[1] advised. The following are a few rules, based on the suggestions made by the Poynter Institute's Bob Steele (United States) and taking into account the history of hostage situations:

1. **Always assume that the hostage taker has access to your reports.** Accordingly, avoid giving any information that could reveal the tactics of the intervention teams, such as images showing the police officers' positions, diagrams showing potential intervention scenarios or the transcripts of police communications.

2. **Avoid giving details on the hostages that could endanger them further.** In 2014, after an editorial error, the *New York Times* published an article that was supposed to come out after the death of Islamic State hostage, Steven Sotloff, mentioning that he was Jewish. The information was taken down from the site "after 27 minutes", when the newspaper realised its mistake.[2]

3. **Refrain from theorising about the terrorist(s)'s psychological traits or political convictions**: one wrong word, and the situation could take a turn for the worse. The same caution should be used when analysing the hostage takers' demands.

4. **Refrain from speculating on the terrorists' plans, the authorities' response or the hostages' experiences**. Such speculation can disrupt the authorities' management of the crisis.

5. **Clearly explain to your public that, for security reasons, you are refraining from disseminating some information.** Carefully assess whether, for the same reasons, you should refrain from broadcasting the crime scene live.

6. **Do not attempt to interview terrorist groups.** The U.S. television channel CBS requires "imperative circumstances" before allowing its journalists to interview a terrorist live, as the channel wishes to avoid becoming ensnared in the trap of giving terrorists a direct and unfiltered podium. In addition, journalists are not generally trained for such a specific kind of interview, in which there is a great deal at stake and one wrongly-phrased question or badly-chosen word could endanger the lives of the hostages. Raphael Cohen-Almagor thus cautions: "Interviews under such conditions are a direct reward for the specific act of terrorism under way and can interfere

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1   United States Department of Justice, National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, Disorders and Terrorism (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1976).

2   http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-29120308

with efforts to resolve the crisis." Furthermore, if the interview is conducted by telephone, it risks monopolising the line and making the negotiators' task more difficult. In France in January 2015, a 24-hour television channel conducted interviews with terrorists, but they were only broadcast once all the hostages had been released.

7. **Do not interview the hostages.** *Agence France-Presse*'s Michèle Léridon notes that the media should avoid disseminating "statements made under duress".

8. **Use your technical equipment with caution.** Generally, the police cordon off the scene, but in the absence of orders or instructions, the media must be aware that, at night, lighting and cameras can cause disruption. Press helicopters or drones can be interpreted as the beginning of an intervention, complicate the communication between captors and negotiators with their noise or even disrupt the equipment used by security forces.

9. **Do not negotiate media privileges with terrorists or their "representatives"**: During the hijacking of flight TWA 847 in Beirut in June 1985, American newscasters were constantly discussing with intermediaries, including negotiating over the possibility of speaking with the hostages.

10. **Do not act as mediator.** Journalists are sometimes tempted to intervene as mediators in terrorist operations, as in October 2002 when the famous Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya (posthumously awarded the 2007 UNESCO / Guillermo Cano Prize for Freedom of the Press) met with Chechen terrorists during a hostage taking at the Doubrovka theatre in Moscow. The title of her resulting testimony is eloquent and poignant: "I tried and I failed".

11. **Immediately call the authorities** if the terrorist(s) contact your office.

12. **Think about the value of the information before interviewing relatives of the hostages**, especially live. Charged emotions and some "coded" phrases addressed to the interviewee may destabilize a situation where people are already on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

made by the British channels BBC and ITN when a hostage situation occurred at the Iranian Embassy in London on 5 May 1980. They only went live when the special forces had saved the hostages.

Do not touch anything at the scene of an attack. Everything must be left in place, similar to a crime scene,[16] in order to avoid complicating the task of investigators.[17] Journalists must also refrain from moving objects, bodies, etc., even to make it easier to film or to improve a photo angle. Doing so could compromise the whole investigation and is punishable by law. In the U.S., on 4 December 2015 after the shootings in San Bernardino, journalists were able to enter the apartment rented by the perpetrators and broadcast images live. They had the permission of the landlord and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), but it caused incredible chaos, which raised serious ethical questions. Journalists exhibited private photos and others searched through drawers. Even though the FBI had left the scene, the media should have wondered about the risk of destroying evidence. The *Columbia Journalism Review* made the following comment: "Without the safety net of editing, live TV requires judgment in the seconds between seeing something revealing and sharing it with millions of viewers. On Friday, amid the media scrum in the apartment of two deceased alleged killers, that judgment was in short supply."[18]

16   https://www.unodc.org/documents/scientific/STNAR39.F.Ebook.pdf
17   http://www.mediacrimevictimguide.com/special.html
18   http://www.cjr.org/hit_or_miss/post_1.php

People light candles and pay respects following the terror attacks in Paris, France in November 2015.

5

Key points

→ Visit terrorist areas without being manipulated

→ Interview terrorist groups without being used as tools

→ Inform on investigations without compromising them

→ Cover trials without glamorisation or demonisation

Chapter 5
Interacting with Terrorist Groups

5.1   Visiting areas controlled by terrorist groups

In the days of classic guerrilla warfare, the media regularly visited areas under the control of organizations seen as terrorists by the governments fighting them. The author and political scientist Gérard Chaliand made this one of his specialities, and his reports on the Peshmerga and the fighters of the African Independence Party for Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) are still classics of guerrilla war reporting.

Some incursions are considered among the 'greatest hits' of journalism, like that of the *New York Times*' special envoy, Herbert Matthews, in the Sierra Maestra, Cuba, during Fidel Castro's insurrection in the 1950s. Another example is the Uruguayan journalist Eduardo Galeano's time among the Guatemalan guerrilla fighters at the end of the 1960s.

Since the rise of extremely brutal groups such as the Shining Path in Peru in the 1980s or the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria in the 1990s, this "rebel tourism" has practically vanished, to the extent that some journalists now wonder about the relevance and even the decency of such adventures.

The *Islamic State* documentary disseminated in summer 2014 by *Vice News* once again crystallised these debates.[1] Medyan Dairieh, an experienced war correspondent, spent three weeks embedded within ISIS forces in Syria. Besides being endangered by coalition bombs, the security risks were obvious: to

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1   https://news.vice.com/video/the-islamic-state-full-length

what extent would the Islamic State group tolerate a journalist from a U.S. media outlet? How could he avoid being apprehended by rival groups or security forces, who severely disapprove of such reporting? Furthermore, Dairieh was confronted with Daesh's very strict regulations, as the group was concerned with controlling its image and the message conveyed. To what extent, then, did *Vice News* become the propagandist of a terrorist organization interested in recruiting foreign fighters and showing the State-like nature of its power over a swathe of Syria and Iraq? Sebastian Meyer from *Foreign Policy* remarked: "The documentary is fascinating. Watching men and young children declare their passion for jihad, seeing masked men on horses patrolling city streets – it's hard to look away. How much it tells us about the reality of life under a caliphate is an entirely different matter."[2]

In his analysis of another "authorised report" on Islamic State territory in Iraq and Syria, produced by the German journalist Jürgen Todenhöfer in October 2014, Jean-Pierre Filiu, professor at *Sciences Po*, the renowned social science research University in Paris, was not far from considering the author to be a 'useful idiot'; a conveyer of terrorist propaganda.[3] However, the German reporter believed that as he had always tried to speak with both sides in all the wars he had covered, this one should not be an exception.[4]

> **If the media accept this risk, they must explain the conditions in which the report was carried out, the limits that were set, how they framed the persons interviewed, the constant surveillance, the verification of all the footage by the militants, etc.**

Transparency is crucial here. The media must think how the report will be exploited by the terrorist group. Even if the tone is critical or negative, militants can pick out the clips or images that suit them and redistribute them across their own media and social networks. They can also stage the presence of "invited or authorised international journalists" for the population under their control and present it as a recognition of their importance and power on the international scene. If the media accept this risk and decide to negotiate "the invitation" with terrorist groups, they must explain the conditions in which the report was carried out, the limits that were set, how they framed the persons interviewed, the constant surveillance, the verification of all the footage by the militants, etc. They must also refrain from using a Holly-

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2   http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/09/how-to-take-a-picture-of-a-severed-head/
3   http://www.sudouest.fr/2015/01/02/moyen-orient-daesh-sur-le-front-des-medias-1781707-5166.php
4   http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/inside-isis-the-first-western-journalist-ever-given-access-to-the-islamic-state-has-just-returned-9938438.html

wood news set-up and thus glamorising the terrorist group. Sobriety and rigour must prevail over the temptation of flamboyant dramatics. Otherwise, as Aidan White from the Ethical Journalism Network remarked, the media run the risk of becoming involuntary fighters for the extremists in the propaganda war. Limiting reports to a 'he said, she said' scenario is not an option either. Although the report can be crude, it must be placed within its context. It must be explained, and the statements that are false or debatable corrected or qualified.

More serious still is when journalists accompany armed forces on operations. "What would you do if terrorists suggested that you film a future attack?" shot a diplomat during a discussion with journalists. The very idea seems indecent, but it is not outrageous. According to Dale Van Atta[5], in the 1970s a German photographer accompanied the Red Army Faction during an attack targeting a residence in Hamburg. And how should we judge the report that a journalist from a British channel carried out in 2010 at the heart of the Taliban country, when militants were directly targeting the British forces deployed in Afghanistan? What are the legal and ethical implications of reports featuring "the other side", in the adverse camp?

5.2   Publishing their press releases

On 19 September 1995, the U.S. terrorist known as the "Unabomber" had the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* publish his manifesto, claiming that in exchange, he would desist from his violent actions.[6]

Although the transaction had been condoned by the FBI, in despair over a manhunt that had lasted several years, it divided the media and journalism in general.[7]

Robert Lichter, director of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, for instance, stated: "If you could be sure of saving human lives, you should publish." Everette F. Dennis from Columbia University, on the other hand, declared that "A news organization should really not be in the business of public safety and police work." Others, too, accused both newspapers of playing into the Unabomber's hands and creating a dangerous precedent.

With the rise of social networks, terrorist groups have less need to go through the media to have their messages disseminated. However, the authorities are still extremely hostile to the dissemination of terrorist interviews or press releases in the media. In 1988, the British government banned British media channels from giving voice to the leaders and members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), its legal front, the political party *Sinn Féin* and protestant para-

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5   *Harvard International Review*, Autumn 1998, p. 69.
6   http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/unabomber/manifesto.text. htm
7   http://www.poynter.org/2002/the-post-the-times-and-the-unabomber/2142/

military organizations. The media circumvented this measure by entrusting presenters or comedians with reading incriminating declarations. After the attacks of 11 September 2001, the Bush administration accused the Qatari channel *Al Jazeera* of inciting its readers and viewers to anti-Americanism and giving a voice to terrorism when it chose to disseminate Bin Laden's video messages.

How should the media treat these messages, given that they are designed to have real impact: recruit activists, fuel fear or cause political repercussions in the target country? According to many experts, the fact Bin Laden sent his video tape the day before the presidential elections in November 2004 reinforced President Bush's security-focused campaign to the detriment of his Democrat rival, John Kerry.

These videos are often newsworthy, but the duty to inform implies rigorously decoding them, because the media could be manipulated, or even accused of complicity. As the Arabic-speaking newspaper *Al-Quds* states, the videos and media campaigns disseminated by Daesh have the potential to tempt thousands of young Westerners to join the fight in Iraq and Syria.[8] The media should not restrict themselves to serving as a communication channel however and whenever a terrorist group wants. They must select the genuinely newsworthy clips, cut out propaganda, explain the context and ask the opinion of the authorities targeted.

The same care is needed for the videos of hostages who are forced to address their governments. In January 2006, for instance, *Al Jazeera* broadcast a video showing Jill Carroll, independent journalist for the *Christian Science Monitor* (United States), when she was held hostage in Iraq. The channel nevertheless followed strict rules, removing the sound, cutting the scene where the journalist was shown with a revolver pointed at her temple and removing her declarations criticising the U.S. government. Another of *Al Jazeera*'s principles is to contact the embassy of the hostage's country and only disseminate the footage when their family has been alerted.[9]

Agence France-Presse simply does not broadcast the images of hostages during their detainment.[10]

5.3   Interviewing terrorists

Interviewing terrorists can shock the public, who often think it indecent, and antagonise the authorities, who are tempted to denounce the media's complicity.

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8   http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=254548

9   http://www.nbcnews.com/id/10948626/ns/world_news-terrorism/t/al-qaida-tapes-often-come-through-al-jazeera/

10   https://www.afp.com/sites/default/files/paragraphrich/201604/12_avril_2016_charte_deontologique.pdf

Brigitte Nacos summarised the situation in the following terms: "It does not make a difference whether an interviewer is tough on the terrorist or his sympathiser. The mere fact that the terrorist is interviewed by respected media representatives and treated 'as someone whose contribution to public debate is worthy of attention' elevates the person virtually to the level of a legitimate politician."[11]

John Owen, the co-editor of *International News Reporting*, wrote: "Central to this debate was the issue of whether journalists should seek out the views of those who are sworn enemies of 'your country', including those who practise terrorism and belong to groups branded as terrorists. Some fellow journalists and many viewers in Britain thus condemned the BBC and its correspondent David Loyn for airing the views of the Taliban as part of his reporting from one of their strongholds in southern Afghanistan. Loyn took great risks to get to the Taliban at a time when British soldiers were increasingly under attack."

For others, seeking interviews is fundamental in the media's duty to inform and analyse. It can be essential to understanding terrorist acts, decrypting their motivations and thus shaping policies to prevent them. "Meeting terrorists is a journalist's duty, not sedition", noted SA Aiyar in the *Times of India* in July 2014.[12] The interviews with terrorists conducted by specialists such as Anne Speckhard, psychology professor and author of the reference book *Talking to Terrorists*,[13] are particularly enlightening, even though some see them as increasing the risk of trivialising evil and humanising barbarity.

The media must nevertheless satisfy a certain number of conditions. Interviews conducted during a terrorist or counter-terrorist operation are particularly risky, especially if they are broadcast live. The risk is that they will serve the terrorists' tactics and reinforce the position of the hostage takers during a negotiation or a confrontation with security forces. Fred Friendly, famous former executive of CBS News, noted that direct, unedited interviews were unacceptable. Most media organizations' codes of conduct ban such initiatives.

Non-live interviews are the easier to devise and plan for, but they still present serious challenges, one of which is safety. The fate of Daniel Pearl, journalist for the *Wall Street Journal*, is a reminder of the danger involved. He was kidnapped in Karachi in 2002 when he was trying to interview Al-Qaida members in Pakistan, and brutally executed. Such interviews also test journalistic integrity: there is a real risk of becoming a pawn in the "Great Game" of terrorism if the media do not manage to keep control of the interview or process it correctly. The context of the interview – at the heart of a terrorist sanctuary and at the mercy of terrorist security services – can also induce a more timid, less

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11   Brigitte Nacos, *Media and Terrorism*, p. 66.
12   http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Swaminomics/meeting-terrorists-is-a-journalists-duty-not-sedition/
13   http://www.annespeckhard.com/talking-to-terrorists.html

"aggressive" journalistic conduct, due to the risk of an unforeseeable, violent reaction from the interviewees.

Establishing contact with persons guilty of criminal actions also raises a legal question: do journalists have the right to make contact with terrorists without warning the security forces, whose mission is to pursue and judge them? Should the actors Sean Penn and Kate del Castillo have warned the authorities that they were negotiating an interview with the 'narco-terrorist' fugitive 'El Chapo' Guzman for *Rolling Stone*? Most journalists would probably reply that it is not the job of the media to be informers for the police, but the procedure undeniably raises serious ethical questions.

In 1986, when the NBC television channel (United States) aired an interview with Abul Abbas, presumed to be the orchestrator of the terrorist attack against the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship, high-ranking U.S. officials denounced a form of complicity and complained that the channel refused to say where the interview had taken place.[14] This opinion was shared by other media. The editorial writer of the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* (United States) thus stated that they hoped that if NBC ever had the opportunity to interview terrorists again, they would send an interviewer equipped with a net (to capture them).

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14   http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1986-05-07/news/8602020000_1_abul-abbas-achille-lauro-terrorists

TO INTERVIEW OR NOT TO INTERVIEW?

Ultimately, the choice mainly depends on each media's editorial policy and idea of journalistic independence and responsibility, but there are some basic rules upon which most media agree:

1. **Remain completely in control of the journalistic mission**, and refuse any limits on questioning that the terrorist group would like to set.

2. **Favour a documentary or 'auteur article' format over a conventional question-and-answer interview**, which provides less scope for the introduction of context, complexity or corrections to the statements of the interviewees.

3. **Clearly and transparently explain to the public the reasons** for which the interview was requested and the conditions in which it was conducted.

4. **Correct the false or fallacious statements that may have been uttered** by the interviewees and give voice to the other players involved (authorities, victims, etc.).

However, the Colombian professor of journalistic ethics, Javier Dario Restrepo, supports journalists' rights to conduct these interviews with people considered criminal by the authorities. He remarked: "One of a journalist's duties is to inform on reality as completely as they can. A fugitive's opinion is part of the reality that citizens have the right to know so as to understand the phenomenon and judge security policies and mechanisms. Although the journalist knows where the interview took place, he or she should not share the information with the authorities, because the consequences could be losing the trust of other sources, which affects citizens' right to receive quality news." Of course, he noted that "it is a different matter entirely when, by a journalist's incompetence or irresponsibility, the interview turns into a glorification of terrorism", but "if the authorities' duty is to locate and capture delinquents, the journalist's is to ensure that citizens are well informed, and these two duties must not interfere with each other."[15]

5.4　Reporting on ongoing investigations

The media must not be guilty of publishing information that could compromise law enforcement investigations. For instance, should the media broadcast the fact that police have a new lead concerning a vehicle used by terrorists without knowing if such a detail could alert the terrorists or compromise the search?

A New York newspaper made this mistake after the bombing of the World Trade Centre in 1993, forcing the police to prematurely arrest a suspect who had been placed under surveillance and was to lead them to the other perpetrators. On 18 March 2016, a French weekly had to defend itself against accusations of "irresponsible" conduct by the Belgian police after broadcasting that the DNA of a terrorist fugitive involved in the attacks of 13 November had been found in a Brussels apartment.[16]

The media should contact the security forces to ensure that broadcasting such information will not have a negative impact on the search for the perpetrators. Even, after serious consideration, if they decide not to follow the police's recommendations for caution? John Wilson, former editorial director for the BBC, wrote that "Journalists are reluctant to agree to blackouts. They dislike the idea of being hand-in-glove with authority [...]. [...] Most editors believe them justified as a rare occurrence so long as they are not imposed by outside authority, so long as the news organizations are genuinely persuaded by reasons given and so long as the blackout is publicly acknowledged whenever possible after the event, a gesture to keep faith with the public."[17]

15　http://www.fnpi.org/consultorio-etico/consultorio/?tx_wecdiscussion[single]=31581
16　http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/attentats-terroristes-a-paris/20160318.OBS6708/attentats-de-paris-l-empreinte-de-salah-abdeslam-retrouvee-dans-l-appartement-perquisitionne.html; http://www.lesoir.be/1157328/article/actualite/france/2016-03-21/l-obs-se-defend-d-avoir-failli-faire-echouer-l-arrestation-d-abdeslam
17　*Understanding Journalism: A Guide to Issues*, p. 143.

5.5   Reporting on terrorism trials

Trials are key moments in collective mourning and the establishment of justice as an essential part of the democratic response to terror. They also help to inform and educate on terrorist acts and terrorism in general.

However, covering these trials raises many questions as to the role of the media. Will they serve as megaphones for the terrorists, jolt the raw sensitivity of survivors and the friends and family of the victims or fuel a feeling of hostility and revenge towards a justice system that gives killers "too many rights"?

This dilemma is particularly tricky in the countries that allow the live coverage of hearings, and thus enable the accused to address the public freely, justify their actions and even continue to spread propaganda for their cause. This was the case at Anders Behring Breivik's trial, held to judge the death of 77 people after a double terrorist attack in Oslo and on the island of Utøya in 2011.[18] The authorities limited the dissemination of images from the trial, but allowed live-tweeting. How could journalists not give voice to the accused when they were limited to 140 characters, at the risk of publishing his statements without checking them or giving context? Some journalists set limits for themselves and repeatedly warned their followers, but everyone recognised the situation was perilous and could go wrong at any time.

> **The medias' key task is nearer that of the judges and magistrates: establishing and clarifying the facts, checking that the procedure is lawful and that fundamental rights are respected, revealing the manipulations of the terrorists, the lawyers or the State, etc.**

Furthermore, trials do not only take place within the boundaries of the courthouse: they also occur outside, in public squares where groups of sympathisers or victims come to express their views; on social networks that disseminate a constant flow of messages and that must accordingly be monitored and checked. The issue is preventing these trials from becoming spectacles, and ensuring that terrorists do not have another opportunity to 'mediatise' their actions. The media should also be aware that the authorities can tarnish the integrity of the judicial process by orchestrating their own dramatics to score points, especially in terms of public opinion.

The press can become an actor in this set-up, through its reporting methods, format and tone, but also through its editorial and political choices – by preferring vindictive justice, for instance, or, on the contrary, by emphasising the importance of the serenity and equity of justice. Its key task, however, as an

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18   https://www.journalism.co.uk/news-features/reporting-the-anders-breivik-trial/s5/a548869

autonomous player in the judicial process, is nearer that of the judges and magistrates: establishing and clarifying the facts, checking that the procedure is lawful and that fundamental rights are respected, revealing the manipulations of the terrorists, the lawyers or the State, etc. The press, as the watchdog of institutions, the guarantor of rule of law and the moral reference for a public that is sometimes tempted by summary justice, places the trial within the defence of the fundamental values that terrorists target and violate, "where the verdict educates the public about the importance of the rule of law in a democratic society, creates a collective memory and sets standards for future conduct of states and people", in the words of the Dutch jurist, Beatrice de Graaf.[19]

These trials are also a crucial moment for the victims. De Graaf thus wrote: "terrorism trials are the platforms where victims may regain their voice and where their fate, as a consequence of the terrorist's offence, is put centre stage." She added: "such trials offer a powerful platform for revealing and challenging the terrorists' narratives by confronting them with the messages of horror, pain and destruction they inflicted upon their victims."

Finally, the media must ensure they do not compromise justice, at the risk of seeing defence lawyers claim that their clients have already been judged in the press and that they will thus be deprived of a fair trial. However, this accusation is difficult to prove before a jury. On 30 June 2015, in its judgement of *Abdulla Ali v. the United Kingdom*, the European Court of Human Rights considered that "adverse media coverage did not prejudice the outcome of proceedings against a suspect in a terrorist plot".

However, as a report drafted by the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) pointed out, "While freedom of expression must always be upheld, media coverage must not become inflammatory so as to negatively impact upon an accused's presumed innocence."[20]

19   http://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-de-Graaf-EM-Paper-Terrorism-Trials-as-Theatre.pdf
20   http://www.ohchr.org/EN/newyork/Documents/FairTrial.pdf

6

Key points

→ Assure the security of journalists and editors

→ Protect sources against surveillance and hacking

→ Prepare for the risk of journalist kidnapping

→ Define a policy in case of abduction (publicity, negotiations, ransoms)

→ Provide assistance to journalists suffering from PTSD

Chapter 6
Safety of Journalists

6.1 Increasing risks

Kidnappings, executions, threats or hacking: terrorism represents a direct and growing threat for journalists. This evolution marks a break in the history of violence and conflict.[1]

Classic guerrillas, often described as terrorists by the authorities, generally had a policy of welcoming journalists into areas under their control, mostly to strengthen their credibility by showing their organizational capacity or their popular support. This was the case during the Cold War, when there were armed, rebel organizations in Latin America such as Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front, and Africa with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front.

However, at the end of the 1970s, the paradigm changed little by little. Organizations such as the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the Red Brigades in Italy, the Shining Path in Peru and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria targeted journalists, considering them as the auxiliaries of the powers they were combating, and thus as enemies.

More than one hundred journalists and media workers were assassinated in Algeria between 1993 and 1997. During the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), kidnapping international journalists became a common tactic. Some, like the American Terry Anderson or the Frenchman Jean-Paul Kauffmann, were held hostage for years before they were freed. Journalists were murdered in Europe

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1   http://edition.cnn.com/2011/OPINION/09/08/simon.press.freedom.911/

too. In 2000 in Spain, for example, *El Mundo* journalist José Luis López de Lacalle was killed by ETA[2].

Today, terrorist hostility towards journalists has become the norm. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 40% of the journalists murdered in 2015 were killed by groups claiming adherence to radical Islam. International press correspondents in particular are considered potential hostages, or sacrificial lambs, whose execution is dramatised to serve terrorist propaganda. This happened to James Foley, Steven Sotloff (United States) and Kenji Goto (Japan), who were beheaded by Daesh.

The local journalists, like those belonging to Raqqa Is Being Slaughtered Silently (RBSS), a group of Syrian journalists operating at the heart of the self-declared caliphate, are also mercilessly hunted and tracked as far as their sanctuary in Turkey. Reporters on assignment can also be threatened by the authorities, either because they do not want reporters making contact with armed groups and spreading their propaganda, or because their own counter-terrorist practices violate the standards of international law.

In such conditions, should journalists venture into these red zones, these "uncivil places", as Richard Sambrook, the BBC's former director of global news, calls them? The question has almost ceased to be asked. Most international media have decided to stop sending their journalists to zones of severe insecurity, such as those controlled by the Islamic State group, drug cartels or the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. However, in that case, can they accept the articles and videos of freelance journalists who continue to go there? Some media refuse, believing that they should not contribute to the insane risks taken by journalists who wish to make a name for themselves by bringing back the photo or the article that will guarantee them – or so they hope – a place in an editorial team.

Some journalists have no choice, because they work in areas where terrorist groups operate: in the Sahel, the tribal zones of Pakistan or the states of Tamaulipas and Veracruz in Mexico. They try to respect basic safety instructions, but they are eminently vulnerable. In November 2015, Pakistani media directors made a series of guidelines available to improve journalists' safety.[3]

Most organizations working to defend journalists have published handbooks on the safety of reporters. Some media also impose strict evaluations of security conditions and send their teams for training before dangerous missions. These training sessions are generally headed by former Special Forces members. However, there is no "zero-risk" scenario.

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2   http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-1265933
3   http://ijnet.org/en/blog/pakistani-media-leaders-compile-list-safety-recommendations-journalists

These precautions also concern the protection of editorial teams. Some media have been the direct targets of terrorist acts. On 2 September 1989, the offices of the Colombian newspaper *El Espectador* were targeted by a truck bomb. They can also be the targets of bomb alerts, which force them to leave their offices. "Media organizations should always have a contingency plan in case of emergencies – like back-ups – to ensure uninterrupted news coverage, "[4] noted Richard Sambrook.

4   http://magazine.journalismfestival.com/journalism-dos-and-donts-in-terror-situations/

UNESCO ACTION FOR THE SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

Promoting the safety of journalists and combatting the impunity of those who attack them are at the centre of UNESCO's action to support press freedom across every media platform.

Since 2008, the Director-General has presented a biennial report on the safety of journalists and the dangers of impunity within the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). UNESCO also initiated the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which was endorsed by the UN Chief Executives Board on 12 April 2013. The plan establishes a framework for action for the UN and its partners (national authorities, local and international non-governmental organizations [NGOs], press institutions and the academic sphere).

In April 2013, the 191st session of the Executive Board of UNESCO adopted the UNESCO Work Plan on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which completes the fieldwork already carried out, in line with the UN Plan of Action, with special attention paid to South-South cooperation. The Work Plan also calls for closer cooperation with the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, as well as regional Rapporteurs such as the Special Rapporteur for freedom of expression and access to information in Africa, the Special Rapporteur for freedom of expression in the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on freedom of the media.

UNESCO's annual World Press Freedom Prize symbolises UNESCO's commitment, by commemorating the memory of Guillermo Cano, the director of the Colombian newspaper *El Espectador*, assassinated by narco-terrorists in Bogotá in 1986.

More information: http://en.unesco.org/themes/safety-journalists

6.2   The protection of sources and surveillance

The confidentiality of sources is one of the pillars of journalistic practice. In the coverage of terrorism, it is imperative.

It is not only a matter of protecting witnesses and interviewees against reprisals, but also removing them from the intrusive surveillance of all those – spies, police officers, private firms, detectives, criminals, etc. – who shadow journalists, tap their phones or spy on them using the Internet.

This protection partly depends on the laws adopted by each country. The recommendations and reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, along with Resolutions of the Council of Europe, rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights all offer invaluable guidelines defining this right to confidentiality.

However, since the controversy originating with U.S. whistle-blower Edward Snowden and his revelations on mass surveillance in 2013, wariness has become widespread, even in countries with laws that protect privacy. The media are now slightly more attentive to protecting their communications.

> **It is crucial to adopt appropriate technologies, train journalists in digital security and communications encryption and respect rigorous procedures when contacting sources and publicly using their statements.**

It is crucial to adopt appropriate technologies, train journalists in digital security and communications encryption and respect rigorous procedures when contacting sources and publicly using their statements. However, there is still much to do in this area, especially since for reasons of practicality or speed, the established security measures can very quickly slacken, opening gaps in source-protection systems that could be exploited by ill-intentioned snoopers.

The duty to guarantee the confidentiality of their sources implies that journalists must take special care to prevent their contacts from being recognised. Too often, blurring faces or distorting voices is a partial or approximative method, as it is not difficult for neighbours, employers or security agents to recognise clothes, an apartment, gestures, speech rate or an accent. The most extreme caution is required, as the consequences of thoughtlessness can be devastating. Journalists continue to circulate in red zones with personal computers or mobile phones containing information that is confidential or compromising for them or their sources.

6.3   In the event of journalist kidnappings

Kidnapping is one of the main dangers for journalists who cover terrorism, especially since this K&R (kidnapping and ransom) industry, as the professionals call it, is increasingly merging with common criminality: groups sell on hostages; corrupt mediators try to involve themselves in negotiations; the rules of the game change according to events.

Despite the unpredictable and arbitrary nature of hostage-taking, it is useful to learn a few basic notions. How should kidnappers be dealt with, and how do you tell which attitude will most irritate them? The testimonies of former hostages, books like *News of a Kidnapping*, written by Nobel laureate in literature Gabriel García Márquez, and practical guides like the UNESCO and Reporters Without Borders' *Safety Guide for Journalists* can offer invaluable pointers, although they are not infallible.[5]

The media must also establish specific procedures in the event one of the members of their editorial team is kidnapped. Particularly, they should decide whether to make the situation known, or keep silent. The opinions of experts and former hostages diverge on the subject, and the choice is all the more difficult as the media have neither a monopoly over decision-making, nor control over the situation. Faced with many unpredictable players and the capacity of terrorist groups to fabricate and disseminate their own information, the media must also consider the policy of their own government. The U.S. and the U.K. defend an uncompromising position, and notably refuse to pay ransoms in exchange for the release of hostages, while other European countries have chosen to negotiate, often going through regional governments to conceal transactions. Negotiations are of a rare complexity, as they involve a range of players – terrorist groups, security services, the media, the friends and family of the hostages and profiteers of every kind – and geopolitical stakes, not to mention varied domestic policies. Negotiations are thus increasingly conducted and guided by specialised security companies, which generally tend to recommend discretion. They believe that this will keep the ransom demands relatively low, and not complicate relations with the hostage takers. However, former hostages deem that, on the contrary, they owe their freedom to vigorous public campaigns.

Dilemmas lurk at the boundary of journalistic ethics: are other editorial teams bound to respect the silence observed by the media who have had a journalist kidnapped? Should they follow government instructions, or respect the wishes of the hostages' families, at the risk of neglecting their duty to inform? On several occasions, particularly when David Rohde from the *New York Times* was kidnapped in Afghanistan and held from November 2008 until June 2009, the whole profession managed to keep the kidnapping of their colleagues a secret.

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5   https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/guide_journaliste_rsf_2015_en_0.pdf

It is undoubtedly the route that many media choose, as journalistic ethics impose a "criterion of humanity", which places the protection of human life at the very top of the news hierarchy.

Others, however, believe that information should prevail and that silence could even represent a danger for the media, particularly for freelancers, as they could underestimate the risks of sending journalists to certain areas.

For Jamie Dettmer, columnist for the news website *The Daily Beast* (United States), silence serves only to give the terrorist groups an advantage in the propaganda war, as it leaves them to initiate any drama. Although a media blackout is justified in the very first days after a disappearance, it may also relieve the authorities of the pressure needed for their mobilisation in the countries where hostage takers operate.[6]

6.4   Terrorism and trauma

Covering an attack or an armed conflict at the heart of "Terrorland" risks having an emotional impact on the journalists called upon to cover the event.

First of all, this is experienced as anxiety, insomnia, irritation and physical problems such as fatigue or headaches. More seriously, it can lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can cause incapacitating feelings of horror, fear and despair. Currently, too few media have adopted sufficient procedures to protect collaborators placed in situations of extreme stress. In February 2014, one of the reports published by the Media Council of Kenya on the coverage of the Westgate mall attack, which took place in Nairobi in September 2013, noted that "Some of the reporters were traumatised and shocked and received no counselling after the incident."[7]

There is also a risk of traumatism for the journalists who are not in the field, but who view images of beheadings or the testimonies given by the victims of attacks or torture, to check their authenticity and decide what will be disseminated in their own media. This is what a study published by the *Eyewitness Media Hub* at the end of 2015 calls the new "digital frontline", which Jackie Spinner from the *Columbia Journalism Review* called "a place where journalists can be battered by repeated exposure to trauma even if they never have to put on a bulletproof vest". She added: "Like a correspondent in the field who witnesses horrific events, social media reporters and editors who view such content on their computers can end up feeling isolated or experience nightmares and flashbacks, typical symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder."[8] According to the study, 40% of the journalists who were interviewed admitted that viewing video testimonies had had negative effects on their personal life.

6   http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/09/02/the-media-blackout-on-hostages-helps-isis.html

7   http://www.mediacouncil.or.ke/en/mck/index.php/news/101-media-council-tables-findings-on-westgate-coverage

8   http://www.cjr.org/first_person/social_media_reporters_and_vicarious_trauma.php

Journalism schools and the media do not generally prepare for indirect trau-matism. Such avoidance cannot be tolerated any longer. The Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma (Columbia School of Journalism) gave practical advice, saying that, as well as the measures taken by media editorial teams to prevent PTSD, the people tasked with viewing violent images on social networks should adhere to strict discipline and adopt precise guidelines to minimise the risks of over-exposure. They could therefore reduce the number of viewings, conceal certain parts of the image when analysing the video, reduce the luminosity of the screen or schedule frequent breaks.[9]

The challenge, as Bill Kovac, former curator of the Nieman Foundation at Harvard, writes in the preface to the Dart Center Manual, *Tragedies and Journalists*, is to "help us all think more deeply and creatively in dealing with the residue of destructive fear and uncertainty while producing the kind of journalism that informs effectively".[10]

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9   https://dartcenter.org/blog/2016/11/storyful-releases-podcast-confronting-vicarious-trauma
10   Hight, J., & Smyth, Fr., *Tragedies and Journalists: A Guide for More Effective Coverage*, Dart Center, 2003.

A correspondent runs after being injured in the leg across a sniper corridor during heavy fighting in Aleppo, Syria in 2012.

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7

Key points

→ After the initial emergency, review the actions of all stakeholders (authorities, emergency services, politicians, etc)

→ Objectively evaluate your own coverage before, during and after an attack

Chapter 7
When Calm Returns: Taking Stock

7.1   After the shock, fundamental questions

The shock of an attack is such that it is difficult to ask certain questions immediately, because the public is not ready to hear them. As mentioned previously, ideas that may seem inappropriate in the immediate aftermath of an attack, such as the wider global context and possible causes, become important points of conversation in the subsequent days.

Likewise, when the security forces ask the media not to air the images of interventions or elements of an ongoing investigation, it is difficult to challenge them, as, once again, the public may not understand why the press could not accept such restrictions. However, when the exceptional emergency is over, journalists have a right and a duty to take stock, and particularly to wonder about the responsibilities and the actions of the authorities, civil society and the political sphere.

These questions inevitably concern the effectiveness of State services and institutions. Could the attack have been predicted? Did the intelligence services fail? Were security measures sufficient? Were the intervention and emergency medical services ready and sufficiently trained? Were hospital capacities up to the task? Were the lists of suspects and victims updated and distributed in real time?

However, there are also more political questions. Did the authorities let the alarm bells of radicalisation go unheard? Did they profit from the emotion

caused by hostage-taking to restrict public freedoms and increase their pre-rogatives over society? Did they pay enough attention to the grievances of the communities that the terrorists claim to represent?

All of these questions are part of the media's task of informing, explaining and monitoring. Following the attack in London in July 2005, Brooke Barnett and Amy Reynolds noted that, although the event had occurred on its own soil, the British press was very critical. Journalists questioned the closure of the whole Underground network, criticised the slow reaction of the emergency response teams and wondered about British engagement in the war in Iraq.[1]

In Belgium, after the attacks of 22 March 2016, the media, who also transmit-ted the findings of the parliamentary committee of inquiry, wondered about the flaws in the police monitoring of terrorism suspects, the coordination between security forces and the collaboration and reactiveness of the emergency ser-vices.

Later, when the shock of the attacks has dulled and other subjects dominate the news, the media must return to the subject, and not just for seasonal piec-es marking anniversaries and commemorations. They must particularly ensure that the victims, who occupy the limelight in the first moments of media cover-age, are not forgotten. They must ensure they cover the news and come back to matters of compensation, mourning, physical and psychological reconstruc-tion and reintegration into society. They may also wonder about an attack's longer shock waves, as Hélène Romano and Adolie Day suggest in their book *Après l'Orage* ("After the Storm"), which explains the impact of terrorist attacks months after the events, particularly on children.

The crux of the matter is continuing to cover subjects on which the response to future attacks depends, "because there will be other attacks". Journalists must particularly check whether the reforms of security or emergency meas-ures have actually been implemented and if prevention and 'deradicalisation' policies are effective.

This procedure particularly lends itself to investigative journalism, and should undoubtedly be undertaken by other institutions than just the media. Medical associations, human rights groups, police trade unions or the official watch-dogs in charge of monitoring the institutions involved in the response to attacks could all help in this effort. However, it is up to the media to check that the situ-ation is effectively followed up and that the authorities and other institutions are confronted with their operational procedures and responsibilities.

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1   *Terrorism and the Press. An Uneasy Relationship*, p. 127.

7.2   A media post-mortem

Due to its violence, its consequences and the controversy that it elicits, terrorism tests journalism. The media must also think about their own practices and hold debriefings.

They must first wonder about their readiness, reactiveness, coordination and cooperation in the face of such events. In the event they notice shortcomings, they must train reporters and the "chain of command" from the editorial team right up to management.

The usefulness and functioning of the equipment used for reporting must also be evaluated (type of camera, availability of a wifi network, etc.).

The media must also consider their writing priorities and analyse whether they sufficiently covered the subjects revealed by the attacks. On 31 January 2001, a report drafted by the Hart-Rudman Commission warned that the U.S. was not prepared to confront a terrorist threat. Despite the seriousness of the commission's warning – "Americans will likely die on American soil, possibly in large numbers," it said – and the prestige of its members, only some media covered its findings.

Richard Cohen, columnist for the *Washington Post*, wrote after the attacks that the media had done "a miserable job preparing the American people for what happened on 11 September". He added: "We – and I mean most of us – were asleep."[2]

"Why, for instance, did no journalist thoroughly investigate the dysfunctional agencies cited in the report?" wondered Susan Paterno in the *American Journalism Review*. "If reputable agencies and public officials had warned of a terrorist attack, why have so few news organizations explored the depth and breadth of that belief?"[3]

When the pressure slackens, it is also the time to ask whether the "cause" championed by the terrorists had really been treated seriously and sufficiently before the event, and if it would have been possible to prevent the explosion of violence by paying greater attention to the requests, social exclusion and strategies of influence within some communities – even minorities.

The media must also review their coverage in the light of ethical rules. They must establish whether it was disproportionate, whether it kindled public voyeurism or instrumentalised the victims, whether it showed itself to be too passive, submitting to the intervention forces and whether it served as a megaphone for the terrorists. The role of journalism schools and associations, as well as their ethical councils, is crucial to hold these debates and thus contribute to a culture of

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2   Susan Paterno, "Ignoring the Warning", *American Journalism Review*, Novembre 2001.
3   Susan Paterno, "Ignoring the Warning", op. cit.

information on terrorism that combines freedom and responsibility.

Terrorism is a key testing ground, Charlie Beckett writes in *Fanning the Flames*.[4] "Improving coverage of terrorism is important because violent extremism is a significant issue and symptomatic of wider problems around the world. The case for more intelligent, informed, and socially responsible reporting of terror is not just a moral plea. It is a chance to show that journalism remains a vital part of modern society."

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4   http://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/coverage_terrorism_social_media.php

Thousands of people gathered in Yaoundé, Cameroon to protest against terrorist group Boko Haram in 2015.

FOCUS: Destruction of Cultural Heritage

The current conflicts in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, have attracted widespread media attention not only due to the heavy loss of life and the resulting refugee crisis, but also for its devastating impact on the cultural heritage and cultural diversity of the affected countries.

Cultural heritage and pluralism have become the direct targets of systematic and deliberate attacks, often driven by ideological motives. Moreover, with urban areas standing on the frontlines, heritage properties often suffer from collateral damage. In Syria, for example, cultural heritage sites, including UNESCO World Heritage sites such as the Citadel of Aleppo and the Old City of Damascus, have been heavily damaged during fighting. Cultural heritage is also severely affected by widespread looting and the illicit trafficking of cultural objects, which not only finances organized crime, but also terrorist organizations.

MEDIA COVERAGE ON CULTURAL HERITAGE DESTRUCTION

It is arguably this latter link with terrorism, and the exploitation of cultural heritage destruction by terrorists for propaganda purposes, that has received the strongest media attention. Indeed, while the accelerated destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq and Syria garnered media coverage beginning in February 2014, references to UNESCO by international media outlets peaked in the months that saw news or activities specifically related to terrorism: the destruction of cultural artefacts in the Mosul Museum in Iraq (27 February 2015); the destruction of the archaeological site of Nimrud (5 March 2015); the fall of the World Heritage site of Palmyra to ISIL/Daesh (20 May 2015); and the destruction of the Baalshamin Temple in Palmyra (23 August 2015). However, neither the liberation of Palmyra from ISIL/Daesh nor UNESCO's rapid assessment mission there generated comparable media coverage.

IMPROVING MEDIA COVERAGE

Reporting on the intentional destruction of cultural heritage by terrorist organizations has generated debates on whether these reports spread terrorist propaganda. Indeed, because most of the areas in question are inaccessible, the mainstream media relies on propaganda videos by extremist groups for images and videos of the attacks. Similar to other propaganda content, such as the beheadings of victims, the use of these types of images amplifies the reach of terrorists and provides them with the attention they seek when carrying out their choreographed atrocities. Therefore, questioning and debate within the mainstream media on the ethics of using propaganda material may be in order. Moreover, the use of alternative visuals, such as satellite imagery, could be strengthened.

Another way in which the media could improve their reporting is by emphasising the cross-cultural, and often universal, dimensions of the affected monuments, sites

and intangible practices, which – particularly in regions such as the Middle East – reflect centuries of exchange between many different cultures, as well as the amazing continuity and resilience of ancient traditions across the centuries. This underlines the fundamental universality that characterises the cultural heritage of all people, which in turn should inspire respect and mutual understanding among groups and individuals.

KEY INFORMATION FOR JOURNALISTS

With regard to the intentional destruction of cultural heritage by terrorist organizations, it is the human dimension that should be emphasised by journalists, more so than images of destruction. Indeed, culture and heritage, as expressions of identity, repositories of memory and traditional knowledge, are essential components of a community's identity and social capital. The significance of culture in the lives of communities and individuals makes its continuity a powerful tool for building resilience, serving as a basis for sustainable recovery. For these reasons, the destruction of cultural heritage, which is often combined with the persecution of individuals based on their cultural, ethnic or religious affiliation, resulting in "cultural cleansing", is also a violation of human rights, including the right to culture, the right to enjoy, develop, and have access to cultural life and identity, the right to education, the right to assemble and freedom of expression.

Another aspect is the ethical and philosophical dimensions related to any proposed restoration or reconstruction project, including the challenges of maintaining or recovering the authenticity of what was damaged or lost, and to the need to ensure that the affected communities can fully participate in decisions related to their cultural life. Finally, the media should become aware of the basic international legal instruments and provisions of international humanitarian law related to the protection of cultural property during armed conflicts, including various UNESCO Conventions such as the 1954 Hague Convention and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols, the 1970 Convention, as well as the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

KEY SOURCES

UNESCO provides verified and confirmed information on destruction and trafficking. As such, it is the prime source for reliable information on this issue. In addition, the competent national authorities of the countries concerned will often be able to provide or corroborate factual information (such as the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria). Reputed international institutions and national research projects may also be able to provide first-hand information, often in connection with a specific initiative (e.g. ICOMOS, ICOM, IFLA or US-based ASOR Project on the safeguarding of the Syrian cultural heritage).

More information: http://www.unesco.org/themes/culture-at-risk

FOCUS: Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property

There has been increasing media attention to the issue of stolen or smuggled cultural property, which can provide a significant source of funding for terrorist groups. UNESCO is the lead U.N. agency responsible for implementing the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which has been ratified by 131 countries.

A RENEWED FOCUS ON CULTURAL PROPERTY

Recent events in the Middle East especially have created a renewed interest in illicit trafficking. Press reports have begun to cover cases involving stolen or illegally-exported objects, illegal excavations and discoveries of fake or forged objects, along with the prosecution of thieves etc.

The volume of this coverage has especially skyrocketed in relation to cultural property from Iraq and Syria, and its link with the financing of terrorism. Numerous reports state that the illegal trade in cultural property is one of the most lucrative businesses for terrorist groups alongside international arms and drug trafficking. In the case of the ISIL/Daesh group, illicit trafficking of cultural property represents a significant source of financing. The group considers artefacts as natural resources to be seized and profited from, giving out permits and taxing diggers up to 20%.

PUTTING THE ISSUE IN CONTEXT

Ultimately, it is important to understand that the issue of illicit trafficking of cultural property is a world-wide phenomenon. Artefacts are trafficked then laundered to give them false provenances, typically through legitimate internationally connected dealers; they are eventually sold through legal channels to buyers in the West, Gulf and Asia. This has been further exacerbated since the advent of the Internet.

Furthermore, while ISIL/Daesh is a major player in the smuggling of the region's cultural goods, they are neither the first nor the only group that have seen the financial benefits of illicit trafficking of cultural property. For instance, since the start of the conflict in Syria, different groups have traded in cultural property in order to acquire weapons or merely as an alternative means for funds.

In Iraq, the looting of archeological sites had been practiced before the current conflict. Plunder and pillage of cultural property has been common since the country's isolation after the first Gulf War and again after the 2003 invasion. It should be clarified that ISIL/Daesh did not 'invent' the practice of archeological looting but they have definitely strengthened and enhanced the circumstances, occurrence and volume of cultural property that is illicitly trafficked to the point that media has started to pay more attention to the issue.

In times of conflict, this trafficking becomes relatively easier as borders are less secure, and areas under serious threat are out of the relevant authorities' reach. In the Middle East, cultural property is usually trafficked from clandestine excavations, thus preventing authorities from giving an accurate estimate of its worth. Media reports are constantly giving false numbers on the value of the illicit market. One report claimed, for instance, that ISIL/Daesh generates hundreds of millions of dollars from the trade in cultural property, more than the total global legal trade of artefacts.

In reality it is impossible to put a number on illicit trafficking of cultural property, primarily, because there is a strong chance that a lot of the looted artefacts have not emerged into the market yet, and also because we have no idea how many pieces have already been sold to private owners. The private nature of transactions has always been hard to quantify, and definitive proof is difficult to come by.

REPORTING ON THE TOPIC

The current problems of media coverage of illicit trafficking of cultural property are similar to the wider issues covered in this publication. This is especially true when it comes to the accuracy of information, with unverified information and exaggerated numbers widespread. For this reason, it has become critical that media platforms ensure that they verify their information and not merely rely on previous reports made by unrecognised sources. Information regarding illicit trafficking of cultural property, or authentication of existing information, should come directly from UNESCO or partners such as INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) or the World Customs Organization (WCO).

Initially, it would be wise when preparing a report on cultural property to explain its importance to societies and illustrate how cultural property is a reference for future generations and should be preserved and protected.

Journalists should avoid giving estimations of the size of the market, as this information is unknown. What is more, journalists need to focus on the symbolic and historical value of cultural property as opposed to focusing on financial aspects. Additionally, there should be more reports on the contributions the international community has already taken to denounce and curb this trade, such as the fact that the UN Security Council has passed Resolutions banning all trade in cultural property from Syria and Iraq. Resolution 2199 expressed its concern that ISIS and others are "generating income from engaging directly or indirectly in the looting and smuggling in cultural heritage items (…) to support their recruitment efforts and strengthen their operational capability to organize and carry out attacks." In response, UNESCO coordinates with its partners to implement these Resolutions and provides support to Member States on effective ways to integrate them into domestic legislation.

More information: http://www.unesco.org/themes/culture-at-risk

Useful Resources

Intergovernmental institutions

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism
http://www.un.org/victimsofterrorism/en/special-rapporteur-promotion-and-protection-human-rights-while-countering-terrorism-specific-work

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/OpinionIndex.aspx

Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF, reporting to the Secretary-General) http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/ctitf/index.shtml
Composed of 36 entities that intervene according to their specific institutional mandate (http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/ctitf/entities.shtml), *such as UNESCO or the World Customs Organization.*

United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (1373 Committee)Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate - CTED, created by Resolution 1535 (2004)
http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/rights.html; http://www.un.org/en/sc/ctc/resources/

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Terrorism Prevention Service)
https://www.unodc.org/

Financial Action Task Force (FATF) http://www.fatf-gafi.org/
Notably published a guide of best practices for States in their fight against the financial sources of terrorist groups. http://www.fatf-gafi.org/publications/fatfrecommendations/documents/bpp-finsanctions-tf-r6.html

United Nations Conventions

http://www.un.org/fr/terrorism/instruments.shtml https://treaties.un.org/Pages/DB.aspx?path=DB/studies/page2_fr.xml&clang=_fr dont:

Examples

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents (1973)
http://www.un.org/en/documents/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/3166%28XXVIII%29

International Convention against the Taking of Hostages (1979)
http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/icath/icath.html

International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997)
http://www.un.org/law/cod/terroris.htm

International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999)http://www.un.org/law/cod/finterr.htm

International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2005)
https://treaties.un.org/doc/db/terrorism/english-18-15.pdf

United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (Report of the Secretary-General, 2014) http://www.un.org/fr/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/841

Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Countering Violent Extremism (2016) http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=19915&LangID=E

Essential reading on terrorism and media

Barnett, Brooke, and Reynolds, Amy, *Terrorism and The Press. An Uneasy Relationship*, Peter Lang, 2009, 208 pages.

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Wiley-Blackwell, London, 2009, 280 pages.

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Seib, Philip, *Beyond The Front Lines: How the News Media Cover a World Shaped by War*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, 185 pages.

Simon, Joel, *The New Censorship: Inside the Global Battle for Media Freedom*, Columbia Journalism Review Books, 2014, 236 pages.

Wieviorka, Michel et Wolton, Dominique, *Terrorisme à la une*, Gallimard, Paris, 1987, 259 pages.

A framework for coverage that is responsible, proportionate and free of stigmatisation and sensationalism...

"News is the lifeblood of liberty." *Katherine Graham*

Targeted towards journalists and media professionals, this handbook is designed to provide key information and encourage reflection on the way that terrorism is covered in the media.

Based upon advice from leading institutions and experts, and filled with examples, it explores the professional challenges and ethical dilemmas inherent in terrorism reporting, and poses fundamental questions about what the impact of current treatment may be on social cohesion and the prevalence of fear in society.

Topics covered:

Journalistic "framing" of terrorism

The balance between freedom, security and responsibility

Ethical issues

The challenges of fear, hate and generalisation

Handling figures, images and words

Coverage of attacks and hostage situations

Management of social media

Relations with victims, authorities and terrorists

Security of journalists

Special sections:

Cultural Heritage Destruction and *Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property*

About the author

Jean-Paul Marthoz is a journalist and essayist. Columnist at the newspaper *Le Soir* (Belgium) and professor of international journalism at the Catholic University of Louvain, he is the author of several books on journalism and international relations. He was previously the Director of the Media Programme for Democracy at the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), European Information Director at *Human Rights Watch* and correspondent for the European Union of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, New York).