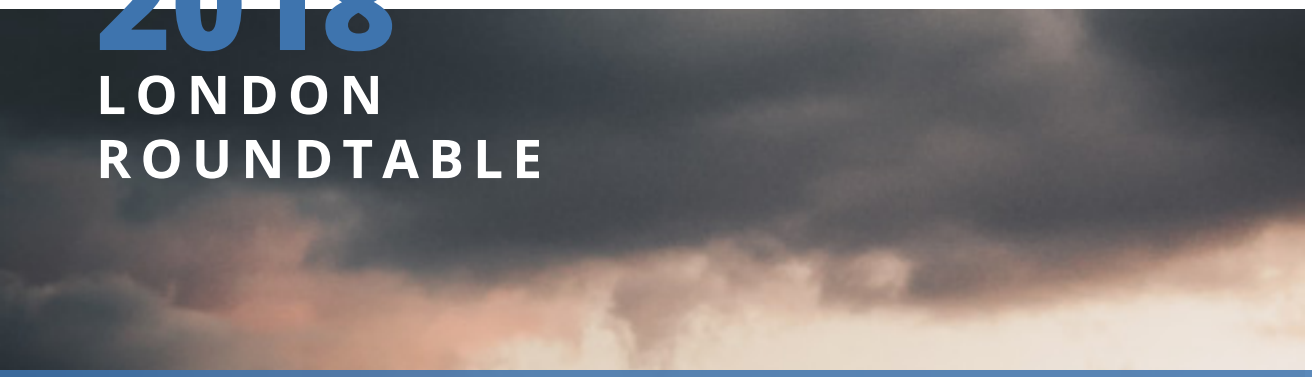
# 2018 LONDON ROUNDTABLE



Dr. Virginie Andre

# Understanding the Impact of Terrorist Event Reporting on Countering Violent Extremism: From A Practitioner's Perspective

ADI ALFRED DEAKIN INSTITUTE FOR CITIZENSHIP AND GLOBALISATION
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Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EGMONT
Radicalisation Awareness Network RAN
PROJECT EXIT

# PREFACE

This report presents the key findings from the London Roundtable on "Understanding the Impact of Terrorist Event Reporting on Countering Violent Extremism". The event was held at the Australian High Commission in London on 30-31 January 2018. The roundtable brought together media practitioners, CVE and PVE front line practitioners, policy-makers and academics drawn from Australia, the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland and the United States of America. Other attendees included representatives from various Australian and British Government departments and New Scotland Yard.

This report provides summaries of each of the panel discussions that were delivered at the roundtable, before drawing out the key themes, which emerged and policy recommendations.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to the following for their support for this roundtable and associated activities: the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; New Scotland Yard; the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations; the European Union Radicalisation Awareness Network and Exit Sweden.

A special thanks goes to roundtable co-convenors Bill Elischer and Abid Raja, roundtable facilitator Benjamin Mols and research assistant Elena Pinot.

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# Introduction

We would like to thank all the roundtable participants for contributing to what was an innovative, thought provoking and inspiring event.

The roundtable brought together media broadcasters, PVE and CVE front line practitioners, academics and policy makers from Australia, Europe and the United States of America representing different sectors of society —civil society, the media community, government, law enforcement and academia. The roundtable was designed to provide the stakeholders a platform to discuss openly and share first hand experiences of the impact media reporting of terrorist events has on their respective work in view of informing and guiding policy-making in the field of media and responsible reporting of terrorism events, and enhancing media broadcasters awareness and responsibility.

Misguided and sensational media reporting of terrorist events is not only impacting on communities but also on front line practitioners work in the fields of prevention and countering violent extremism, and on policy-making. Media reporting affects how communities as well as mainstream societies understand, interpret and react to particular terrorist events. It shapes communities' perceptions of mainstream society and governments but also their own communities as well as their place within that particular society. Media reporting of terrorist events can undermine social cohesion, cause irreparable damages to communities, polarise societies and give rise and perpetuate discrimination, racism and violence.

The experience of the United Kingdom is particularly informative in understanding how sensational media reporting has impacted on the efforts of communities to build social cohesion in particular parts of London such as in Hounslow and Islington boroughs. France and Belgium have not been spared either. The experience of Australia, Belgium and France also demonstrate that young people are highly impacted by the media reporting of terrorist events. Research conducted in Belgium (Andre, 2017) indicated some individuals radicalised after watching a television documentary on ISIS.

With ISIS having called for its supporters to carry out deadly assaults globally, we have witnessed in 2016 and 2017 either directed or inspired attacks by ISIS supporters in Afghanistan, Australia, Belgium, Bangladesh, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Iraq, Pakistan, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Media sensationalism is not only feeding fear, it may also act as an unwitting facilitator to inspire those who identify with ISIS ideology and indirectly enhance ISIS credibility and agency. It is the responsibility of policy-makers to develop sound strategic communications around terrorist events and develop policies in the field of responsible reporting of terrorist events.

This roundtable demonstrated the strong commitment of each and everyone of the participant media and front line practitioners in contributing to building meaningful partnerships between communities, agencies and analysts in tackling the challenges posed by violent extremism to our societies. As the report will demonstrate, the roundtable has brought about significant outcomes for the way in which we harness best practices and learn from grassroots and front line practitioners, and generate innovative thinking and partnerships in developing responsible reporting of terrorist incidents.

The roundtable has enabled the building of a stronger understanding and respect of media practitioners, policy-makers and front line and community practitioners' common challenges, as well as to identify key areas of possible intervention in media strategic communication.

**Dr. Virginie Andre**

# Program

## Understanding the Impact of Terrorist Event Reporting on Countering Violent Extremism

### DAY ONE

**Welcome Address**

Abid Raja (New Scotland Yard), Bill Elischer (DFAT), Dr. Virginie Andre (Deakin University)

**SESSION ONE**

Reporting Terrorism: A Balancing Act

**Academic and Journalistic Perspectives**

Prof. Rik Coolsaet (Ghent University), Mr. Jean-Paul Marthoz (UNESCO), Rudi Vranckx (VRT), Burhan Wazir (WikiTribune), Dominic Casciani (BBC)

**SESSION TWO**

Policing Implications of Media Covered Terrorism

**A Law Enforcement Front Line Practitioner's Perspective**

Abid Raja( New Scotland Yard), Hanif Azizi (Swedish Police), Violet Baert (CUTA)

### DAY TWO

**SESSION ONE**

Fearing Terrorism: The Effects of Media Coverage of Terrorist Attacks on Communities

**CVE Practitioners and Communities Perspectives**

Robert Orell (Exit Sweden), Ahmed Rehab (CAIR Chicago), Abdelkader Railane (Mission Locale/COPEC), Tony McAleer (Life After Hate)

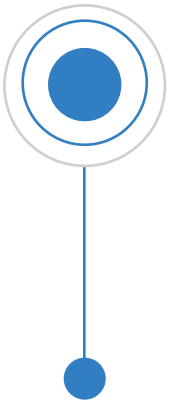
**SESSION TWO**

Terrorism and Strategic Communication

**Strategic Communication Practitioners Perspectives**

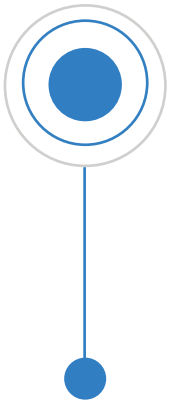
Jonathan Russell, (EU RAN Working Group Communication and Narratives), Anna Lena-Lodenus (Journalist), Cathrine Moestue (Psychologist),

**SESSION THREE**
Media Terrorism Reporting and Youth Mental Health



**Youth Practitioners and Youth Perspectives**
Alyas Karmani (Street), David D'Hondt, Jounaid Hayani (MolemZap), Abdi Cisman (Kolvi), Dr Virginie Andre (Deakin University)

**SESSION FOUR**
Terrorism, Media and Policy-Making



**Policy-Makers Perspectives**
Jessika Soors (City of Vilvoorde, Belgium)

**SESSION THREE**
Lessons Learnt and Formulating Policies: Terrorism and the Media

Hugo MacPherson (ESCN)

# Roundtable Key Points

## NEWS ROOM REALITIES AND 24 HOUR NEWS CYCLE

- The balancing of media reporting of terrorist events is not an easy task and poses its own challenges when media practitioners are reporting on events as they unfold and reporters have to respond to the pressure of their own newsroom and the public need for information.

- It is also important to consider the realities that journalists have to face in performing their work, often under pressure, undermined by decades of commercialism, evolving in an extremely competitive environment, challenged by social media and spin doctors from the government, corporations and NGOs.

- Terrorism reporting tests the core values of journalists. There are existing problems with the media, which lack preparation, and can lead to superficial and careless reporting, often letting fear determine editorial projects and the political line of media reportage.

- The 24-hour news industry intrinsically seeks relevance and audience attention by prolonging stories and providing different angles, which often veer well beyond the actual crime reported. The "Islamic terrorism" narrative provides analysis-rich fodder for the constant stream of opinion-based news talk shows on television and radio, as well as op-ed columns in newspapers.

- The 24-hour news cycle and how it intersects with terrorism and violent extremism news coverage need to be better understood in order for the media to have an effective role in the prevention and countering of violent extremism.

# BALANCED TERRORISM REPORTING AND CONTEXTUALISATION

- While it is important to report the facts, media practitioners agree that the provision of context to news reporting on terrorism is fundamental. It is of public interest to demystify the root of terrorist violence and why people do what they do.

- A free and responsible press is needed but there also needs to be truthful, comprehensive and intelligent reporting that gives meaning to the event.

- However, a careful balance between what is known and what is unknown needs to be found when reporting on terrorist events.

- An increase of reporters' local and on the ground knowledge and expansion of their local networks, and a better news contextualisation will assist in a more balanced reporting on terrorism related issues.

- Representatives of diverse religions and different voices to represent the diverse communities are needed for a better media representation and more balanced stories.

# POSITIVE STORIES AND ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

- The media can positively assist in the prevention and the countering of violent extremism by providing space for more moderate media voices and soft narratives. For instance, the reporting on more positive examples of people who are at risk of radicalisation, and who yet choose a different path, would contribute to the efforts of PVE and CVE.

- There is a need to connect the concerned communities to the wider public to curb the effect that terrorism reporting may have on these communities, by also promoting more positive stories about these communities and providing a further context.

- The creation of safe spaces where young people can have honest and safe conversations is essential to counter the problematic narratives.

- Participatory media offer a space for young people to report on their communities and put forward positive stories and at the same time assist them in (re)gaining self esteem.

- The lack of content in terrorism reporting creates caricatures and stigma, which reinforces certain groupthink narratives.

- Media reporting on terrorism should offer opportunities and platforms for the silent majority to engage in the public debate.

# POLARISATION AND DIVISION

- Polarisation as a result of media reporting has a real social impact, and has significant implications for the prevention work of local authorities at the grassroots level. The individuals that media choose to give airtime to, such as politicians or certain individuals, may contribute to reinforcing certain polarising narratives, as they often focus on extreme narratives.

- The way terrorist related events are reported by the media and the way in which political discourse responds to these events have a direct impact both on public opinion, and on the communities that are the recipients of the unwanted media attention in ways in which can be divisive and polarising.

- How to depolarise media reporting? Often politicians or certain individuals with particular opinions are given a platform to express themselves. In an increasingly media driven society, there is an urgent need to provide a platform for the middle part of society, which often has a different and less polarising narrative to offer and of which media reporting would benefit wider society and lessen the effect of polarisation.

- Although a difficult and very sensitive topic, there is an urgent need to raise awareness with media partners on the impact of their coverage. The business needs of media need to be balanced with maintaining credibility, especially during this period of 'fake news' and populist politics.

# TERMINOLOGY, WORDING AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

- Terminology is important. There needs to be a clear understanding of terminology and a responsible use of the terminology. All levels of government authorities and media should use the same terminology, for mutually agreed benefit.

- In the context of terrorism reporting, particular attention has to be paid to the choice in use of labels and wordings as these can have severe and dangerous consequences.

- A better understanding of the practical implications and practical outcomes of the use of the word terrorism needs to be developed in order to reduce its negative impact.

- Labels are particularly unhelpful, counter productive and in some cases alienating. The way the media and political discourse uses labels to speak of terrorism and the communities, contribute to polarisation and division rendering the work of front line practitioners particularly difficult with the concerned communities.

- The use of double standards in identifying and attributing blame when reporting on terrorism is impacting negatively on communities and young people. Addressing the issue of double standards in terrorism reporting and political discourse would assist in lessening stigmatisation.

- In some instances, media reports on terrorism have sparked the interest of young people to find out more about the issue and for some have paved the way to their radicalisation.

- In addition to the problematic use of labels in terrorism media reporting, media overgeneralisation creates confusion as to what terrorism is aand who terrorists are. It is about criminal activity, about individuals and organisations. It important to understand that it is not about communities but about individuals within communities. The role of communities needs to be clearly understood and demonstrably so, in order to counter politically pervasive rhetoric that harms pragmatic CT work.

# MEDIA MISTRUST AND RADICALISATION

- The application of double standards in reporting terrorism and the negative framing of young people, of their communities and of their neighbourhoods has resulted in a lack of trust in the media.

- The decline in confidence in media and governments is creating a vacuum, which makes it easier for violent extremists to manipulate the narrative for their own end and at the same time makes the recruitment of young people possible.

- Terrorism should be reported in a non-extraordinary and balanced manner such that people do not find themselves in a binary polarising standpoint position.

- In the current media terrorism narrative, Muslims continue to be presented as natural perpetrators of terrorist and violent extremist attacks. This narrative is both problematic and false.

- The double standards in terrorism reporting not only benefits terrorist organisations such as ISIS but it also plays right into the hands of the far right. The far right has proven in the last decade to be particularly effective in its communication strategy, using new reports about migration and terrorism to mobilise and generate discussions on their social media platforms.

# NEXUS BETWEEN TERRORISM MEDIA REPORTING AND POLITICS

- The media have the power to manipulate or to impact on the events they cover for a variety of reasons which can benefit political responses to terrorist events and lead to drastic legislation changes.

- In fact, media and policy feed into each other. The media can create opportunities to develop balance views on matters of importance.

- Local authorities can act as an echo chamber and a conduit to channel information between the media and the local public, and vice versa. This way, the local public can feel represented by the narratives the city echoes in the media and the city can disclose narratives available in media that do not automatically always reach the local public and debunk some of the more problematic media narratives.

- In conducting their work, local governments have developed important relationships based on trust, respect and confidence with their vulnerable citizens and vulnerable families. Media reporting can have a detrimental impact on those relationships and increase the vulnerabilities of at risk individuals and families.

# MEDIA IMPACT REPORTING ON FRONT LINE PRACTITIONERS

- On the ground efforts and professional behaviours in the prevention and countering of violent extremism can be impacted by media polarisation and the emotions it generates.

- At the prevention level, media reporting can hamper preventative work with communities, which is essential to the prevention and countering of violent extremism efforts.

- At the operational level, the way terrorist events are reported by the media, the use of certain terminology and the type of information sometimes released by the press have direct and important implications for law enforcement work such as direct, urgent investigative work, or public safety during and in the aftermath of a terrorist attack.

- The publication of names and areas where suspects are living hinders police work and their ability to build trust; an absolute imperative in CT deliverability.

- Media reports, such as those describing suburbs such as those of Rinkeby in Sweden as a "No go Zone" or Molenbeek in Belgium such as the "hell hole of jihadism", are over generalisations and dangerously harmful. At a law enforcement practitioner level, it makes the work of police officers increasingly hard, endangering communities' trust in front line practitioners and partnerships so essential to prevention work. Police officers find themselves having to explain to the communities where they work that these reports are misguided. They have to reiterate that they are effectively trying to help the communities living in these areas.

- In the field of CVE, it is essential to not damage relationships in communities. In Muslim communities, the distrust in the authorities is significant and can be corrosive. It results from the fear and paranoia the communities experience as they come under heavy suspicion as a whole. Additionally, in some communities, distrust in authorities is almost about self-preservation when the authorities in their countries of origin imprison, torture and murder. The media reporting of these communities within the context of terrorism therefore can be problematic and has the potential effect of reinforcing communities' existing views and sentiments of distrust they may have towards authorities.

- Front line law enforcement practitioners have identified trust building and active partnerships as key in the prevention and countering of violent extremism work, which in turn will assist in disabusing community paranoia and conspiracy theories.

- Front line practitioners work is severely impacted when political discourse or media reporting feed into communities' conspiracy mindset. This disconnection and often contradicting discourses and realities at the national and at the grassroots levels effect PVE AND CVE efforts.

- Understanding the pressures the communities are experiencing is vitally important to front line law enforcement practitioner work. Good and effective PVE, CVE and CT work relies on community trust and partnership. For communities to feel they protect their stake in society and build community trust and partnership, they need to be provided with a safe framework.

- The relationship between law enforcement and media is an important one. Within law enforcement there needs to be a comprehensive approach on how the police manages within its own structures its relationship with the media and how it manages information.

- According to CVE and PVE practitioners, in many instances this impact translates into a sense of hopelessness among communities with which CVE and PVE front line practitioners are confronted and have to deal with when working in vulnerable neighbourhoods.

# MEDIA, TERRORISM AND PUBLICITY

- The media should starve terrorists of their oxygen. To do this, there needs to be a better understanding of the symbiosis between the media and terrorism. Particular attention should be paid to understand and better respond to how a terror attack is carefully choreographed with the aim of attracting media attention and which targets an audience: society at large.

- News media coverage of terrorism events has evolved in the last few years, focusing much more on emotional appeal, which can lead to polarisatioan and the glorification of terrorism by some.

- Excessive and detailed media coverage of terrorist attacks can bolster at risk youth, generate support for terrorism and transform criminals into heroes.

# MEDIA TERRORISM REPORTING AND MENTAL HEALTH

- There needs to be media awareness of how stories impact on the mental health, livelihoods and wellbeing of young people, and what are their internalised consequences.

- Terrorism reporting can generate stress, feelings of victimhood, frustrations and anger towards the misrepresentations and labelling of Muslims in the media.

- Muslim communities and young people are struggling to overcome the negative stereotypes and the media pressure on them, particularly around terrorism, which makes them become extremely self-conscious and vulnerable.

- This difficult environment affects youthmental health, resulting in low self-esteem and a lack of sense of belonging

- Media and language play a significant role towards youth identity formation.

- Many of the drivers for people to join violent extremism are related to shame. Collective shame is when one is made to feel worthless because of who one is and not for what one has done. The danger with media reporting is that it contributes to that collective shame by making people and communities feel less worthy because of whom they are and not what they have done.

- Individuals eel they are being singled out by labels, and many are ill equipped to deal effectively with this impact and differentiate the nuances.

# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND TERRORISM

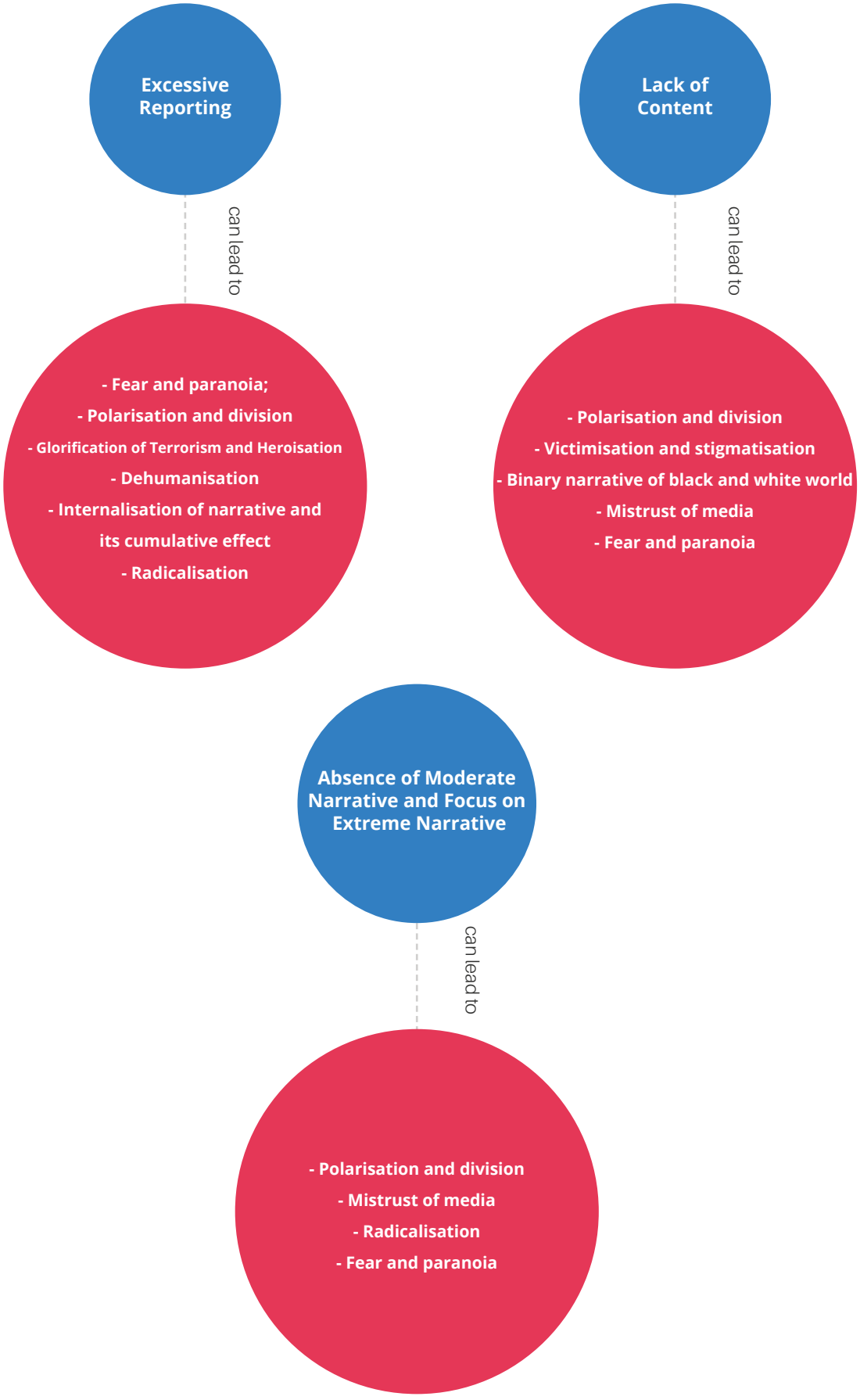
- More research needs to be conducted to assist with strategic communication for the media to target audience, potential supporters or audience not directly in the reach of governments and security agencies.

- In order to shift people's position, not from the extreme but towards a middle ground, alliances are key to produce this shift more effectively. There is an urgent need to work together to communicate strategically in the aftermath of a terrorist event.

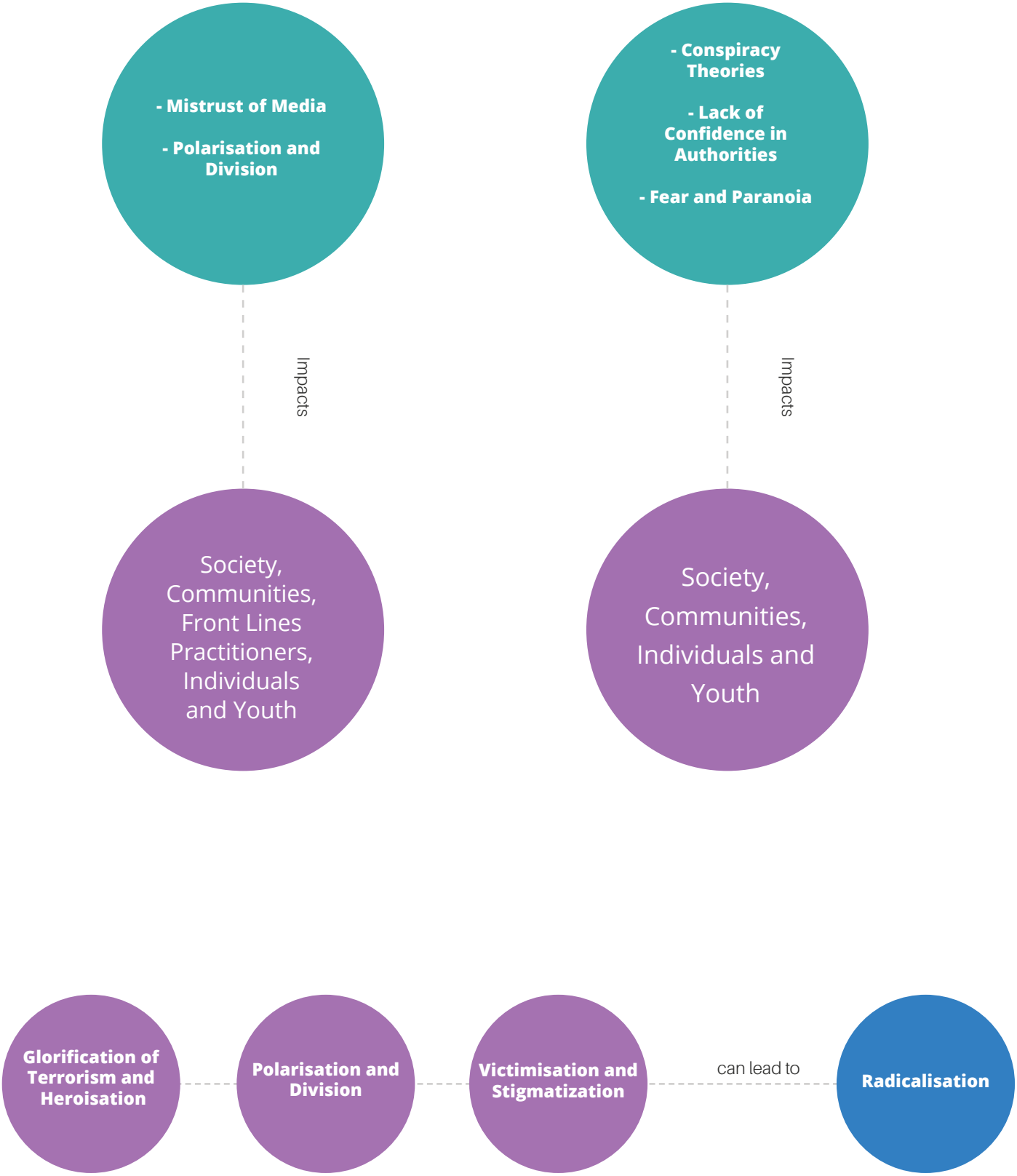
- From a communication perspective, there are four main objectives in responding to terrorist events: 1/ preventing copy cat violence; 2/ preventing reciprocal violence (The first two is focusing on violence after Islamist attack and preventing far right reciprocal attack); 3/ disrupting propaganda and ensure that terrorist do not achieve getting the strategic effect from terrorist attack, or achieve polarisation of all communities and all audiences, which is what terrorist is trying to achieve in general; and, 4/ thinking through terrorist event and how does the media unwittingly deliver the strategic effects, what the media is absolutely empowered to do itself.

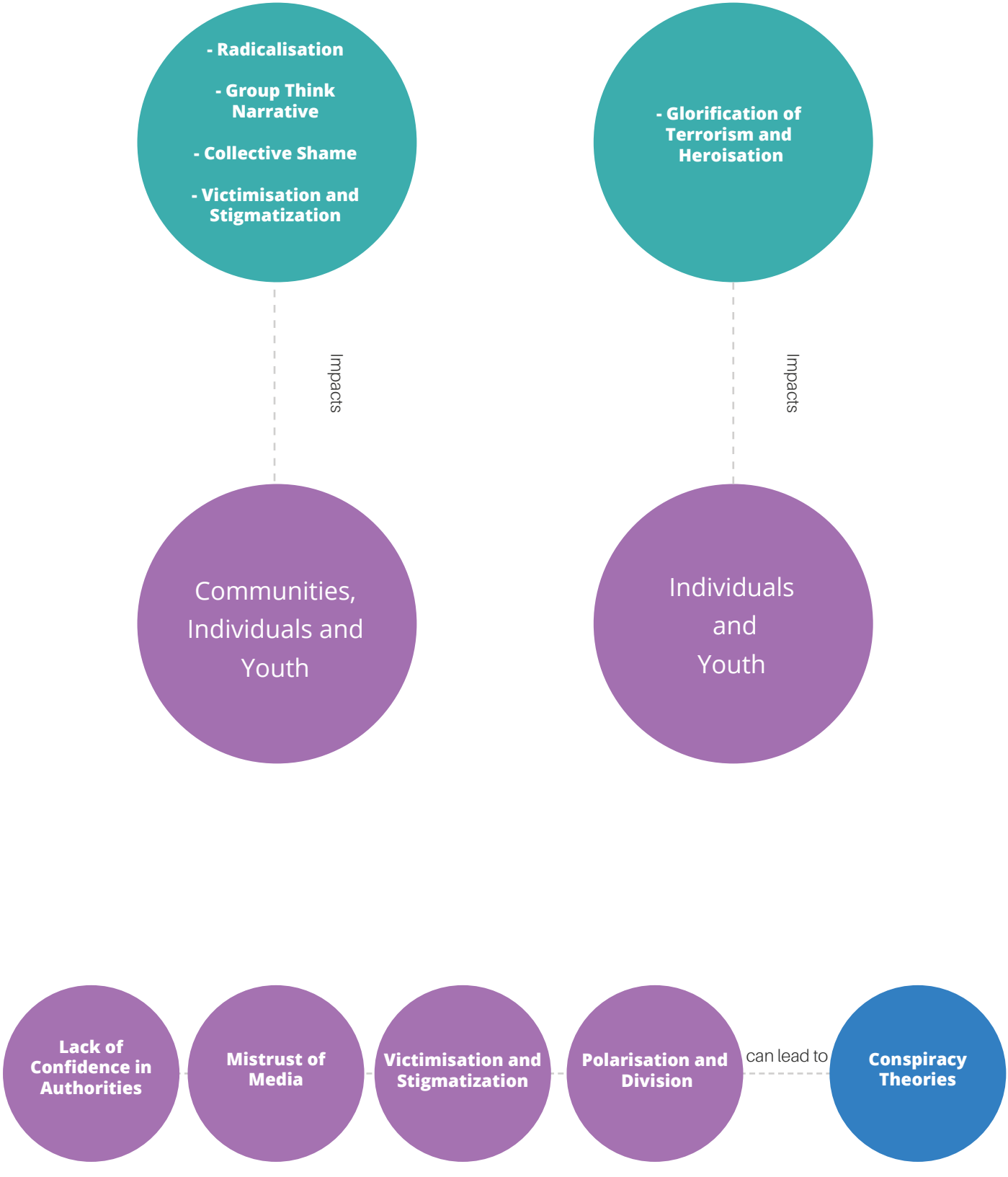
# Media Reporting

## Impact of Media Terrorism Reporting


Excessive Reporting
can lead to
- Fear and paranoia;
- Polarisation and division
- Glorification of Terrorism and Heroisation
- Dehumanisation
- Internalisation of narrative and its cumulative effect
- Radicalisation
Lack of Content
can lead to
- Polarisation and division
- Victimisation and stigmatisation
- Binary narrative of black and white world
- Mistrust of media
- Fear and paranoia
Absence of Moderate Narrative and Focus on Extreme Narrative
can lead to
- Polarisation and division
- Mistrust of media
- Radicalisation
- Fear and paranoia

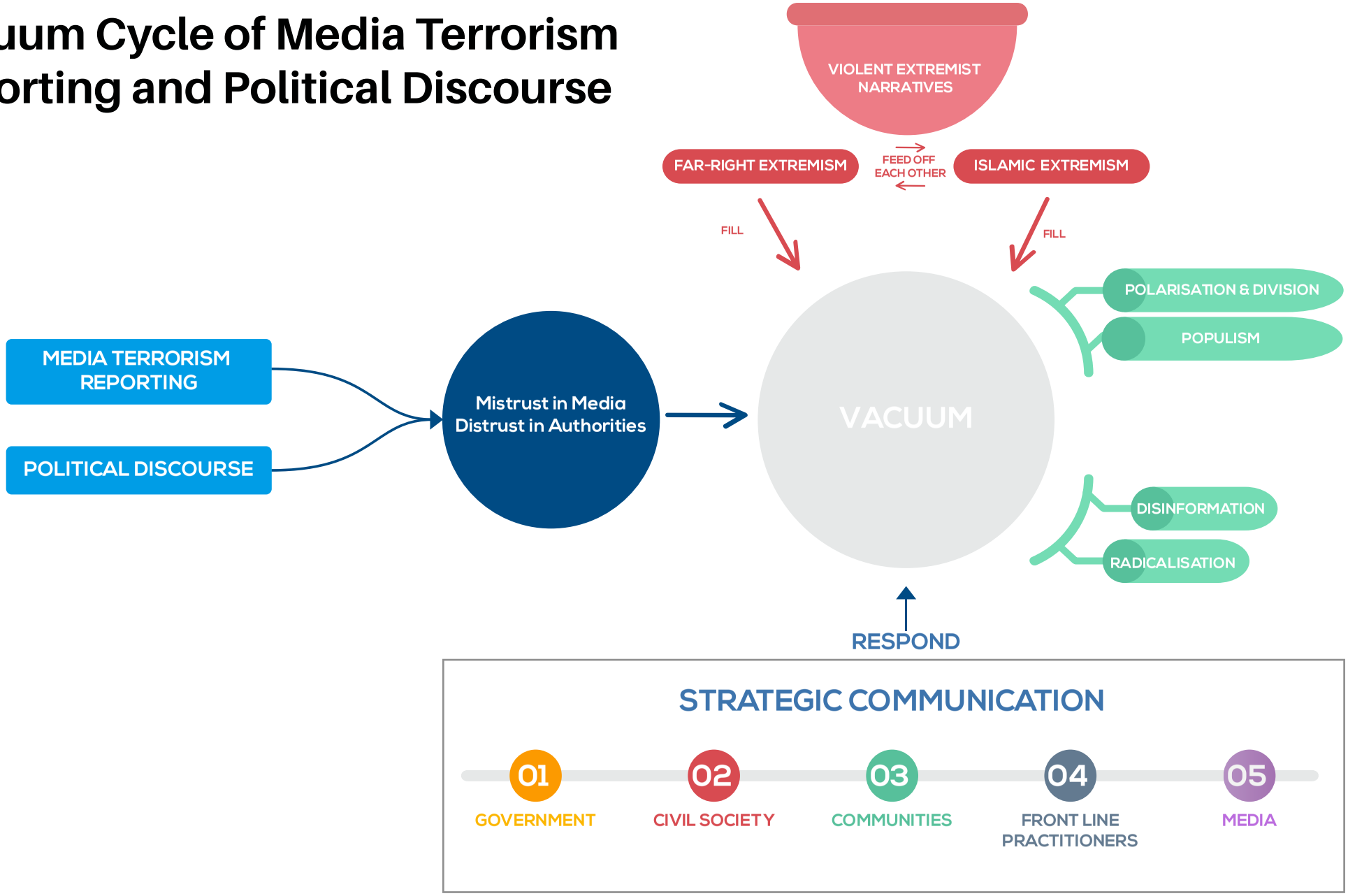
# Impact of Media Terrorism Reporting (Continued)



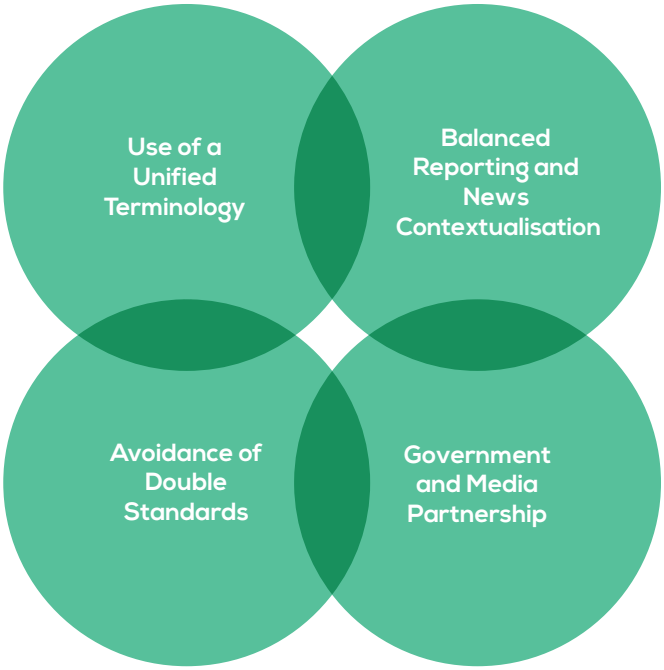

- Radicalisation
- Group Think Narrative
- Collective Shame
- Victimisation and Stigmatization
Impacts
Communities, Individuals and Youth
- Glorification of Terrorism and Heroisation
Impacts
Individuals and Youth
Lack of Confidence in Authorities
Mistrust of Media
Victimisation and Stigmatization
Polarisation and Division
can lead to
Conspiracy Theories

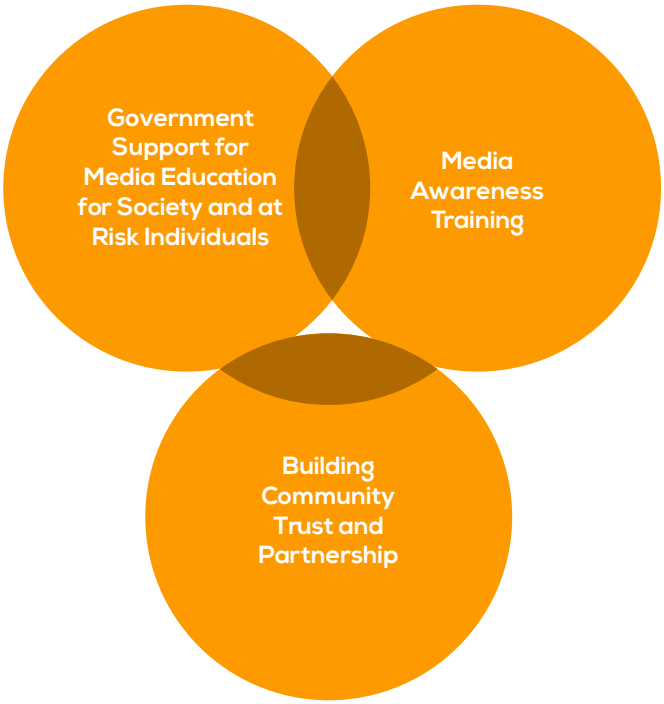
# Media Terrorism Reporting Effect

# Vacuum Cycle of Media Terrorism Reporting and Political Discourse



# Proposed Actions



# Recommendations

**BALANCED AND THRUTHFUL REPORTING -** Truthful, comprehensive and intelligent reporting that gives meaning to the event is needed.

**BLIND SPOTS -** Blind spots, which are often ignored or overlooked when reporting on terrorist events, should be identified and covered.

**CONTEXT -** Provision of context to news reporting on terrorism is fundamental. It is of public interest to demystify the root of terrorist and extremist violence and why people do what they do.

**POSITIVE STORIES AND PARTICIPATORY MEDIA –** The promotion of more positive stories about concerned communities are needed and will allow to empower communities and connect them to the wider public to curb the effect that terrorism reporting may have on these communities.

**TERMINOLOGY –** There needs to be a clear understanding of terminology and a responsible use of the terminology. All levels of government authorities and media should use the same terminology, for mutually agreed benefit. Misuse of terminology impacts severely and dangerously on communities and put at risk front line practitioners' work in the prevention and countering of violent extremism.

**TERRORISM AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE –** The way media and political discourse respond to terrorist events have a direct impact both on public opinion, and on the communities that are the recipients of the unwanted media attention in ways in which can be divisive and polarising.

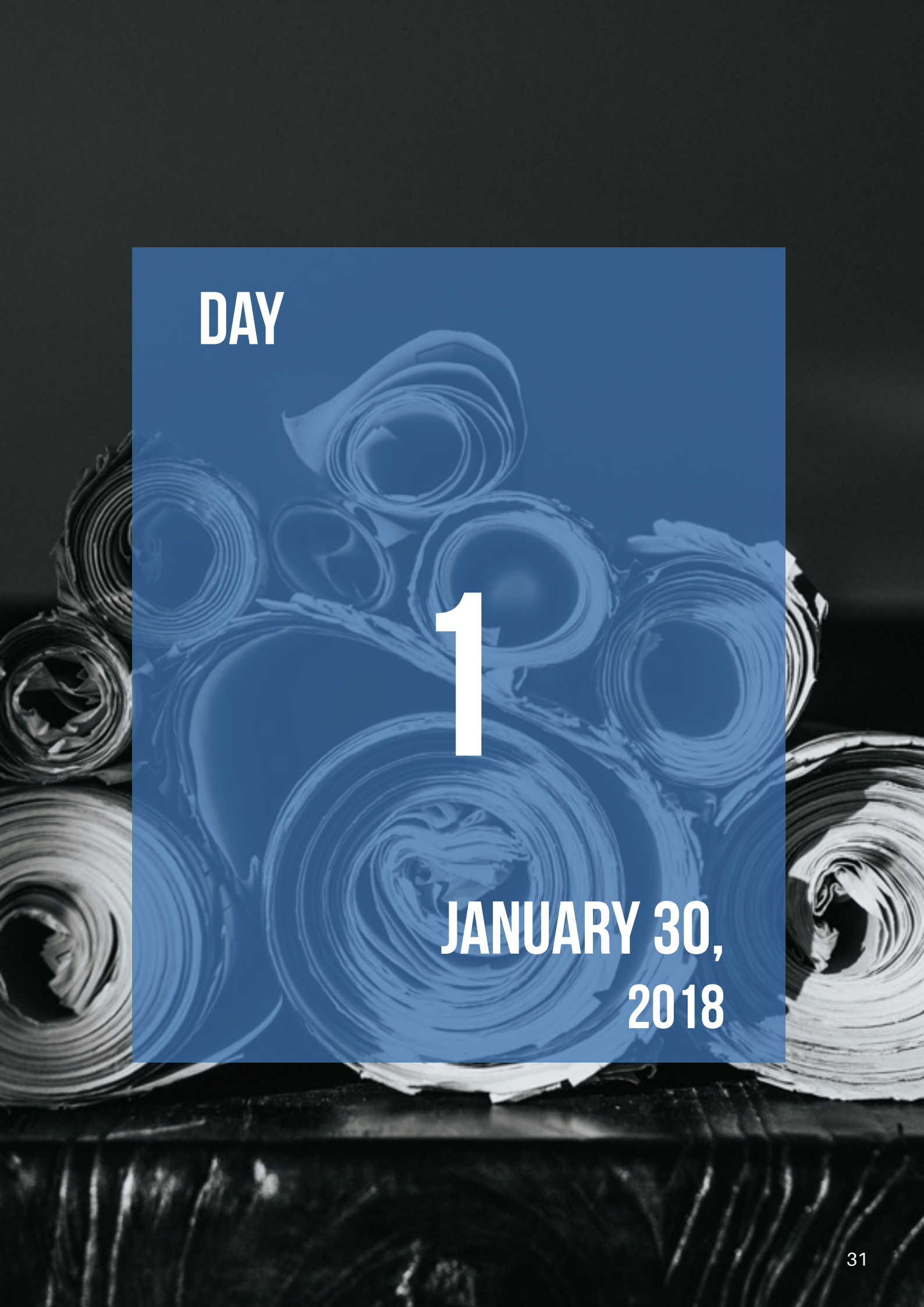
**GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR MEDIA REPORTING OF TERRORISM –** Governments should establish partnerships with media practitioners in order to support media organisations to achieve more balanced reporting, lessen polarisation and promote social cohesion.

**GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR MEDIA EDUCATION –** In light of the significant effect media coverage of terrorist events has on people, and young people more particularly, governments have a responsibility to provide media education to society and young people.

**RAISING AWARENESS ON TERRORISM REPORTING –** media awareness training programs should be developed for reporters as well as policy makers to support them in the coverage, communication and management of post terrorist and violent extremist attacks.

**COUNTERING POLARISATION, STIGMATISATION, AND PARANOIA –** There is an urgent need to provide a platform for the middle part of society, which often has a different and less polarising narrative to offer and of which media reporting would benefit wider society and lessen the effect of polarisation. Promoting and building community trust through active partnerships will allow to debunk conspiracy theories and paranoia.

**REBUILDING TRUST IN THE MEDIA –** Rebuilding trust in the media is becoming a pressing issue in order to fill the information vacuum, resulting from the public decline in confidence in media and governments, which has made it easier for violent extremists to manipulate the narrative for their own end. For this, more balanced reporting, avoidance of double standards reporting, and better media representation of middle voices and the promotion of positive alternative stories are needed.


DAY
1
JANUARY 30,
2018

# SESSION ONE:
# REPORTING TERRORISM: A BALANCING ACT (ACADEMIC AND JOURNALISTIC PERSPECTIVES)

*Discussion on the balancing of media reporting of terrorist events, the challenges it poses, and its potential impact on public opinion.*

### Professor Rik Coolsaet (Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, Belgium)

In his introductory presentation, Coolsaet focused on the importance of understanding media as political discourse. To illustrate his point, he gave the example of the controversial statement made by Former French Minister of Interior Claude Gueant in 2012 in which he said that "Not all civilisations are equal." Such public statements, widely relayed in the mainstream media, have a direct impact on the ground for communities as well as front line CVE practitioners. In this instance, even the French police felt the impact of the Minister's statement in the streets while doing their job. Even before the advent of globally accessible social media, as early as 2005, what was published in mainstream media impacted a number of people and communities in Belgium, and created divisions. This impact translates to a sense of hopelessness among communities with which CVE and PVE front line practitioners are confronted and have to deal with when working in vulnerable neighbourhoods.

Coolsaet argued that more constructive questions should be asked: Are we sure radicalisation is increasing? Are we sure terrorism is increasing? We simply do not know what radicalisation means. It has many purposes with many agendas. We have not come up with objective metrics or numbers to measure radicalisation. We have to be careful when we are using common words, to understand their implications in real life, particularly if we are uncertain of what they mean and are too abstract.

The choice of words in political discourse as well as in the media has significant impact on the ground for front line practitioners but also for communities.

Quoting Andrew Parker's first speech as MI5 general director at the Royal United Services

Institute in 2013 with regards to the violence in Northern Ireland, Coolsaet pointed out that "the ragged remnants of a bygone age" to which Parker refers in the context of terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland and how they "are in a cul-de-sac of pointless violence and crime with little community support" is very much transferable to jihadism. He argued that this statement could be applied to what has been described by Belgian national and international media as the 'hell hole of Jihadism,' ie. the city of Molenbeek in Belgium. Similar to Northern Ireland, there is no or very little community support of jihadism or violent extremism. The young people involved in the terrorist attacks in France and Belgium lived in the margins of society in Molenbeek; they are part of the deviant fringe.

**The way terrorist related events are reported by the media and the way in which political discourse responds to these events have a direct impact both on public opinion, in ways in which it can be divisive and polarising, and on the communities that are the recipients of the unwanted media attention.**

Following the Brussels terrorist attacks in March 2016, significant media attention was given to a statement made during an interview with Belgian Flemish daily De Staandard by Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon who claimed that "a significant proportion of the Muslim population danced in the street following the attacks".

This type of political discourse and media coverage is to the detriment of positive initiatives such as those of the mothers and street youths who fight against violent extremism in Molenbeek. How can we make this positive energy, this positive work and messaging reach not only public opinion but also PVE front line practitioners when politicians such as Jambon cause division and polarisation? **Coolsaet stresses the importance of ensuring that media does not serve political agendas and to be aware that news as political discourse can have severe consequences. He cautions against overgeneralisations and advocated balanced reporting.**

Coolsaet ended with a quote by Former Scotland Yard CT Command Head Peter Clarke who in 2004 warned against the dangers of labelling. In fact, in 2004, following the Madrid bombing, Clarke encouraged the media to not use the phrase "Islamic terrorists" as it was both "offensive" and "misleading". For Coolsaet, the perpetrators of the Paris and

Brussels attacks were living in the margins of their communities and with us, academics, politicians and the media, qualifying this kind of deeds as Islamic, how do we then reconcile that with the people who live in these communities? The value of society is found in the ways it reads its own minorities.

### Jean-Paul Marthoz (UNESCO, Paris)

Jean-Paul Marthoz developed the UNESCO manual for journalists reporting on terrorism available in French, Spanish, English and other languages. The development of the manual was not without its challenges, as it needed to be relevant for media practitioners around the globe and not only for those working in a western context. Furthermore, the manual is not limited to jihadism, but extends to other forms of violent extremism, such as exercised by the state or far right extremism. Marthoz also explained that the manual encourages the highest ethical values of journalism but that **it is also important to consider the realities that journalists have to face in performing their work, often under pressure, undermined by decades of commercialism, evolving in an extremely competitive environment, challenged by social media and spin doctors from the government, corporations and NGOs.** Marthoz further explains that journalism and journalists have seen their professional prerogatives ceded to outsiders, such as citizen journalistsor expert scholars writing opinion and analytical pieces.

Quoting Margaret Thatcher, who in 1985 cautioned media practitioners against giving terrorists the oxygen of publicity on which they depend, Marthoz urged the need to better understand the symbiosis between the media and terrorism. Particular attention should be paid to understand and better respond to how a terror attack is carefully choreographed with the aim to attract media attention and which targets an audience, society at large. Journalism's essential role is to inform, but blackouts should also be carefully considered in all editorial decisions.

Catherine Graham, former head of the Washington Post, once stated that "publicity maybe the oxygen of terrorism but it is the lifeblood of liberty".

Terrorism reporting tests the core values of journalists; or who you are as a journalist.

There are existing problems with the media which lack preparation, and lead to shallow and sloppy reporting, often letting fear determine editorial projects and the political line of media. In some cases, fear mongering, together with religious and ethnic stigmatisation is part of media companies that exert their privilege without responsibility.

Terrorism tests journalists' professional competence. Marthoz warned against reporting for "tweet factors" and advocates for careful and mindful reporting. **The press should see itself as a beacon of the media sphere. The media should be an anchor to resist shock and awe, be clear, accurate, fast and responsible, and write the best obtainable version of the truth.** There is no place for speculation. There should be rigorous fact checking, be right rather than be first. He also insisted that the media must distinguish themselves from social media. The press should be part of the efforts to protect life during a terrorist attack, and in the aftermath of it. The UNESCO guideline is to be a human being first then be a journalist, help victims first, not hamper security nor become an informer revealing whereabouts of victims, not serving as megaphone for terrorism, and not theorising, nor glorifying terrorism. A journalist needs to keep his or her autonomy, maintain strict ethics around victims and not stigmatise specific communities when reporting on terrorism. They should avoid "fusion journalism" which often affects reporting in the hours that follow a terrorist attack and is often motivated by a feeling of empathy towards the victims, or a call for national unity. The sentiments of shock and humanity cannot replace the journalist's duty to report on the facts as they are.

Marthoz also advises that there should be clear guidelines on the use of social media, not name victims, report rumours, check their sources, have a clear chain of command, have corporate procedures in place that protect journalist against trauma, have a rigorous post mortem journalism. It is not only about reporting and delivering fact, and not just about collecting information or connecting dots. **A free and responsible press is needed but there also needs to be truthful, comprehensive and intelligent reporting that gives meaning to the event.**

### Dominic Casciani (BBC News, UK)

Casciani explained that the BBC reports on verified facts and is very clear when it does not have all the facts. **In journalism, it is essential to be sure about one's facts and to be honest when one is not certain of the facts, without necessarily causing additional alarm.** He gave the example of the recent attacks in Manchester and described how social media was pushing certain stories over others. Journalists operating at the national level need to know where that line lies between the facts that are known and those that are not, and should be clear on all its sources when reporting on events like the Manchester incident. Casciani explained how it is a balancing act for journalists when they find themselves under pressure to report live on an event, as it unfolds within a 24/7 media cycle. Broadcasters are even more under pressure when they do not exactly have all the information at the point they begin to broadcast – yet rumours and unverified accounts are circulating on social media. If people believe what they are being told by their friends and contacts on social media, then the journalists' job becomes even harder.

Casciani recounted an anecdote on a false alarm in London, which he had the misfortune to have to report on:

"A report came in on what looked like a taxi driver driving into the Natural History Museum on a very slow Saturday afternoon (news-wise), social media goes wild about the incident. When reporters get there Scotland Yard had put lots of resources on this incident 15 minutes after the event. The general public definitely thinks it is a terrorist attack. A woman standing next to me asks me: 'Tell me what is going on, is London under attack?' She said her son, who lived in Canada, was sending her links from social media, claiming a major terrorism attack was underway. I replied 'I am standing here next to you, I know just as much as you what is going on'. Fortunately, it was just an accident.

He gave another example of when the BBC newsroom was on alert as there was some kind of lock down in the tube. Social media at the time blamed the alert on a shooting incident but this was not verified.

After ten minutes live, the journalists were informed that it was not terrorism – yet tens of thousands of people who were only consuming social media at that point, still believed

there was a terrorism attack in the heart of London. Whatever the type of alert, even if it not necessarily a terrorist incident, Scotland Yard still has to respond to the alert and reporters have to sit and wait.

With these anecdotes, **Casciani showed how important it is for journalists to work out what they can really report on at one particular moment and what they have to hold back.** In the newsroom, difficult decisions are made such as whether a broadcaster should record an event, or when resources should be put into understanding why someone has done something (eg. coverage of terrorism trials). Is it of public interest to demystify the root of violent extremism and why people do what they do?

The BBC is understood globally as a house of expertise and of old fashioned journalism. It has a handbook of best practice which has guidelines on how BBC reporters should do their job in all manner of circumstances; Interview victims, report on acts of violence and outlines their responsibilities on reporting major events.

Casciani posed the question: "How do you report on such issues in the aftermath of the attack in Paris? We have to decide on what pictures are to be shown." Unfortunately, the handbook does not always follow the way news works, as working in the newsroom can be tricky when reporting on terrorism. At the end of the day, it comes down to the BBC's view of how it broadcast these events for the British domestic audience and networks.

### Rudi Vranckx (VRT, Belgium)

Rudi Vranckx has covered wars and conflict for the last 25 years, including the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks and in more recent years the conflict in Iraq and Syria. Vranckx explained that he had learned from his many years as a war correspondent how to report on terrorism and how to cover these particular types of events. While these events are regularly front page news in Brussels, Vranckx argued that reporters need to be looking for the other layers when reporting on terrorism, and questioning whether their way of reporting is the right approach or not.

He quoted Winston Churchill, who was a former war correspondent, and talked about the fog of war: we are free to report anything we like except what the war was really like. **News business is often running after the facts, that means being the first one to report but not cross checking the facts, and going live.** To illustrate this, Vranckx focused his attention to Molenbeek and the news reporting that followed the Brussels terrorist attacks. He argued that it is possible to report on what the inhabitants of Molenbeek do in their everyday life, to watch how they respond to the attack, but for that you need to be on the ground and have your own networks. How do you then report on what is Islam in Molenbeek and Brussels? The public needs journalists to cover events, but also for them to be practicing critical journalism.

For instance, Vranckx interviewed one of the most notorious terrorists in Belgium through a phone call; he was speaking to him from a Baghdad prison. As he only had 15 minutes to speak with the inmate, he focused on what he should ask him and what he should show the public. In the interview, the inmate addressed his families and relatives and stated that ISIS violent extremism is not Islam. Unfortunately, the newspapers minimalised this aspect of the interview, only to publish a 'juicy story' and without quoting any source.

As a journalist, Vranckx cooperates with the intelligence community and maintains his responsibility and freedom in that he does say or does not say. As he pointed out, he is not a 'ventriloquist' for the intelligence agencies. It is possible to maintain a sound, professional and mature relationship, but this has to come from all sides. He would always question facts such as whether Muslims were actually dancing in the streets of Molenbeek in the aftermath of the Brussels attacks.

Instead of racing after juicy bits of detail as a journalist, he wanted to understand rather what was really driving the Belgian jihadists - to unravel the mechanism of recruitment and the psychology of the jihadist. He went to the conflict area and met with ISIS fighters to find the extra layers - Why do they take part in Jihad?; Why did they go to Syria?; Were they looking for redemption?

For Vranckx, journalism is about providing a context and not only focusing merely on facts about the actuality of events.

No one in Belgium has asked the Molenbeek community how they felt about the people

who left to fight for ISIS. These important details, the context, can only be found through discussions with people from Molenbeek, in the streets. **To find the other layers to the story and looking for the blind spot, what is not being talked about, what is not on the front page of the newspaper is what is important.** We need to ask the question: What do we do with the returning foreign fighters? Or with the women and children of the caliphate? What role does polarisation play in society? To his mind, the essential idea of journalism is beyond facts, to provide context. The best way to proceed is in cooperating with the justice department, intelligence and security organisations and not to forget social work and the community itself. He ended with a quote from Oscar Wilde "the truth is rarely pure and never simple" and then added: "and is certainly not sensational".

### Burhan Wazir (WikiTribune and Al Jazeera, UK)

In the summer of 2016, months before the U.S. election, the head of of Columbia Journalism School asked three authors to put together a series of papers on terrorism and the media. The purpose was to research and launch three papers, which might provide some understanding of the election of 2016 while drawing on historical analyses of terrorist attacks. The papers were launched to the international media in New York, New Orleans and Denver.

Burhan Wazir was asked to write a 15,000 word article about how the media's reporting of terrorism often has consequences for politics and social media behaviour. As a journalist, Wazir has covered terrorism for fifteen years.

His research paper revisits four historical terrorist attacks, political responses and the consequences of those actions.

The first case studied was the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the following Israeli election. The second was the attack on Madrid and the election that followed. The third was the U.S. election of 2004 that ensued in the post 9/11 era amid two foreign wars. Wazir's final case study was the Indian election, which followed the attack on Mumbai in 2008.

He chose these terrorist attacks since they had very different motivations and did not all involve Muslim radicals.

Wazir asked the important question of whether these events were manipulated to the benefit of the politics of the day and what was the media reporting influence and impact. To some degree, he was also seeking to find out if those political responses have had long term ramifications.

The Israel case focused on the election that Netanyahu won primarily through debates on television. The acting Prime Minister and election candidate Peres looked nervous on TV and could not articulate his ideas as clearly as Netanyahu. It was an election conducted in the public sphere to show who could keep his real faith and not so much about politics or economic direction. It was based on nationalist sentiment.

Spain's election, on the other hand, was less predictable. A few hours after the Madrid attacks in 2004, the Spanish Premier stated in a press release that the ETA was behind the attack. This turned out to be incorrect and the Premier's statement turned a large section of the public against the government.

Spanish public opinion was at the time disillusioned with Spain's involvement in Iraq, in what it saw as an American war.

The Aznar government lost the elections three days later. In the years that followed the Madrid bombings, Spain was hard hit in 2008 with an economic recession. This resulted in a loss of confidence and disillusion of sections of the Spanish population towards the media and politics.

The 2004 U.S. elections were held just one year after the US invasion of Iraq and two years after the commencement of the Afghan war, in an era marked by the post-9/11 terrorist attacks. In light of the significant death toll and the financial cost of the war effort, Bush became increasingly unpopular. Three years after the attacks, a large section of American media continued to report it was at war. Wazir explained that when it came to the electoral debate between Democrat candidate and war veteran John Kerry and President Bush, the debate came down not to politics but to whether one was for the war on terror or against it, and which one of the two candidates would keep U.S. citizens safe.

Wazir said that there is room for some optimism in the case of the 2009 Mumbai attacks and the elections that followed the same year.Ten attackers held under siege a large metropolitan city. The siege had a live tele-

vision coverage for 60 hours and 2.5 million Tweets were sent (this was during the early days of social media). Hijackers were interviewed live on television while conducting the attacks. The media manipulation of the events became part of a government inquest.

But there were two significant consequences to the Mumbai attacks. The ruling party of Premier Singh won the elections as it appeared that his government appeared could keep India secure.

The government inquest into the coverage of the attacks found that large sections of

the media had behaved irresponsibly. This sparked changes in legislation around responsible media.

In all, the paper demonstrated all four **events were manipulated or impacted by the media for a variety of reasons which benefited political responses and often led to sweeping new legislation which had a knock on effect on privacy, reporting restrictions and individual freedoms.** Most important was the analysis by researchers and experts that the balanced reporting of terrorism in an age of social media remains paramount.

# KEY POINTS:
# Reporting Terrorism - A Balancing Act

- The balancing of media reporting of terrorist events is not an easy task and poses its own challenges when media practitioners are reporting on events as they unfold and reporters have to respond to the pressure of their own newsroom and the public need for information. It is also important to consider the realities that journalists have to face in performing their work, often under pressure, undermined by decades of commercialism, evolving in an extremely competitive environment, challenged by social media and spin doctors from the government, corporations and NGOs.

- This is of course not without any impact on public opinion and the concerned communities, and on politics.

- While it is important to report the facts, media practitioners agree that the provision of context to news reporting on terrorism is fundamental. It is of public interest to demystify the root of terrorist violence and why people do what they do.

- A free and responsible press is needed but there also needs to be truthful, comprehensive and intelligent reporting that gives meaning to the event.

- However, a careful balance between what is known and what is unknown needs to be found when reporting on terrorist events.

- When reporting on terrorist events, there are blind spots, which are often ignored or overlooked.

- There is a need to connect the concerned communities to the wider public to curb the effect that terrorism reporting may have on these communities, by also promoting more positive stories about these communities and providing a further context.

- The way terrorist related events are reported by the media and the way in which political discourse responds to these events have a direct impact both on public opinion, and on the communities that are the recipients of the unwanted media attention in ways in which can be divisive and polarising.

- In the context of terrorism reporting, particular attention has to be paid to the choice in use of labels and wordings as these can have severe and dangerous consequences, impacting not only on communities but also front line practitioners' work.

- The media have the power to manipulate or to impact on the events they cover for a variety of reasons which can benefit political responses to terrorist events and lead to drastic legislation changes.

- The media have a direct impact on the ground for communities as well as front line CVE practitioners, and sometimes can hamper the work of law enforcement agencies.

- According to CVE and PVE practitioners, in many instances this impact translates into a sense of hopelessness among communities with which CVE and PVE front line practitioners are confronted and have to deal with when working in vulnerable neighbourhoods.

- In the age of social media, balanced media reporting of terrorist events is paramount.

- The media should starve terrorists of their oxygen. To do this, there needs to be a better understanding of the symbiosis between the media and terrorism. Particular attention should be paid to understand and better respond to how a terror attack is carefully choreographed with the aim of attracting media attention and which targets an audience: society at large.

- Terrorism reporting tests the core values of journalists; or who one is as a journalist. There are existing problems with the media, which lack preparation, and leading to shallow and sloppy reporting, often letting fear determine editorial projects and the political line of media reportage.

# SESSION TWO:
# POLICING IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIA COVERED TERRORISM (A LAW ENFORCEMENT FRONT LINE PRACTITIONER'S PERSPECTIVE)

*Discussion on the effects media coverage of terrorist attacks has on law enforcement practitioners and their work.*

### Abid Raja (New Scotland Yard, UK)

"Are we sure?" For Abid Raja, this question is crucially important. He continued further: "What do we actually know? How do we go about getting that information? What does it qualify? What is our connection to communities? To what extent have we correctly diagnosed the situation? Who are our communities? The Muslims? What do we mean by that? Why are they here?" Raja explained that the Muslim communities are not homogenous and there is a degree of assumption about Muslims. There is an urgent need for community reporters, leaders, and representatives to discuss what it all means. He posed the question of **who is doing the defining in and about Muslim communities.**

As a police officer in London, he has worked in different parts of the city. North Kensington, for instance, is an interesting part of town, which is very diverse with hundreds of languages spoken and a real melting pot of global communities with the generational divide being key to understanding extremism. So talking about the 'Muslims' as a group of people is as helpful as talking about the 'non-Muslims', not particularly useful.

Raja pointed out that Muslims are a very "complex bunch" like the broader non-Muslim community. No Muslim came to the United Kingdom with the aim to spread Islam, and the majority of Muslims living in the United Kingdom do not seek to spread Islam. **This fear of the spread of Islam has become a fashionable thing to believe in because of the threat and fear terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS pose.** In fact, the British way of life is threatened by these organisations with effective, if somewhat crude propaganda, that generates a national discourse which suits their agenda. The way we

think at a national level is sadly not the discourse that is reflected at a grassroots level. This disconnection and often contradicting discourses and realities at the national and at the grassroots levels impact severely on his work as a law enforcement and CVE practitioner. Unless, the communities have active partnerships, it will be very hard to solve the problem of radicalisation, particularly with violent extremism being very difficult to intercept, if not almost invisible.

After 9/11, Muslim communities in Britain became seriously concerned for their own safety as they came under a massive cloud of suspicion. Some even considered whether to remain living in the United Kingdom. Politicians and the media asked difficult questions. But the main concern in the communities having been to protect their stake in the United Kingdom, and not to be perceived nor reduced to the simple notions of fundamentalists or Muslim radicals.

As a result of this suspicion, places such as the mosque, where young people should be able to learn about Islam, are not taught about Islam.

This is because the imam and the community as a whole are absolutely convinced that law enforcement agencies such as Scotland Yard have infiltrated the community deeply and all lines of communication have been tapped. Everything they do is recorded. Raja explained how it has become a real paranoid response. The trustees, who employ imams, are often local politicians, as in all local communities. As a response to this climate of fear and suspicion, they have instructed the imams to avoid any discourse that may arouse the attention and suspicion of MI5, particularly during jummah, the Friday prayers, and also the largest gathering of the week. Imams are being told that MI5 are in the community, it is infiltrated and they have to uphold whatever sectarian perspective the community upholds. Consequently, imams have a very careful tightrope to walk. **Raja stressed that it was important to understand that nothing is being talked about in the mosque. The communities are too frightened. The imam will not talk about foreign policy, jihad and certainly not sharia. The young people who want to talk about these issues are forced to talk about it elsewhere.** This leads to situations where they find, via Google, like-minded individuals and they are making up Islam as they go along. To understand the pressures in the community is important.

As a practitioner, Raja was of the view that unless the communities trusted him, they cannot report any threat they may see coming; although, they want to help because they want to protect their stake in British society. There is a need to provide the communities with a safe framework. If communities choose to get involved they cannot see MI5 or the police as a threat, nor can they be painted by their own as a spy or a snitch. There is a genuine concern for their own safety when considering working with the authorities.

His work and that of other CVE practitioners are severely impacted when government statements or media reporting feed into the community's conspiracy mindset. It is easy to understand why the Muslim communities are falling for conspiracy theories and paranoia. Law enforcement officers may have access to certain sensitive information to which communities do not have access. This begs the question: "who shapes their worldview?" The media shapes their worldview as well as the fear they see around the world and the images that beam through their television screens.

Another point to raise is representation from the community and how this whole discussion between officialdom and the communities has taken a peculiar course. How do we know who is credible, when most community members have no clue, are frightened and nervous? How do we get a sense of trust in dialogue, who is jumping up to be a self-professed leader and why, which is another problem?

Another issue Raja pointed to, is the growing tension there currently is in Europe between secularism and religion, leading to political agendas advocating progressive moderate liberal Islam. This resulted in discourses around identifying who is an extremist and who is a moderate. Such a dichotomy, including **the use of labels such as Salafi, Sufi and Wahhabi is simply muddying the water. Raja stressed that it is not about Islam but rather about criminality - terrorism is a crime. Most often, the communities do not have the foggiest ideas about Salafis and Sufis. These labels have in fact very little if no relevance on the ground for communities.** It is not a helpful terminology, and can constitute an impediment to the good process of law enforcement work.

There is a risk of being led into squabbles that have nothing to do with extremism or terrorism; it is just one community having a go at another one. Trying to decide theolo-

gy for any community; good, bad or ugly is catastrophic mistake that simply is undeliverable. There is need to remain firmly grounded in practical CT deliverables or we will continue to indulge in a politicised discourse which ultimately may be counter-productive to CVE and CT efforts and in fact aid the terrorist groups we seek to overcome.

Propaganda war creates a difficult life for Muslims. It is a complex set of issues, the ommunities are confused, the general public is confused and media are not much better. **The only way through this is a genuine long-term approach, to identify the people in the community with whom we can work, identify a range of credible voices and to empower them and train them about the media and work in partnership as far and deeply as possible.**

### Hanif Azizi (Swedish Police, Sweden)

When Hanif Azizi was a young boy, he dreamt, like many refugees, that he would have the chance to go to Europe. He was told about ice cream vans and and that children in Europe had their own money to buy ice cream. He would stand in front of a mirror and pretend to speak Swedish. He grew up in the desert, in a military camp in Iraq. Originally from Iran, his parents were members of the People's Mujahedin of Iran organisation. Until 2012, the organisation was considered a terrorist organisation by Canada and the United States. He grew up in his home environment thinking: "we are the good ones and we are fighting the evil ones, the regime in Iran".

But in 1991, in the midst of the war between Iraq and the United States, he had to run to the sound of sirens and hide in bomb shelters with fellow school children, an incident he vividly remembers until this day.

One day an old camouflage bus came to take away Azizi and his brother to safety. Azizi was 9 years old, and his mother said to her son that he was now responsible for his brother. She explained to him that she could not come with them.

He took his brother's hand and jumped onto the bus full with other screaming children, and the parents were waving them off. As the bus was leaving Azizi remembered how he kept eye contact with his mother until she was smaller and smaller and was only a dot. The plan was for him to go to Sweden, grow up to be an adult man and then come back to Iran and Iraq and fight for the People's Mujahedin of Iran organisation. He came to Sweden with his brother. He moved from one family to another, and he did not have a good life. When Aziz turned 19 years old, he explained he did not know what to do with his life. He did not know if Swedish society was for him. So he started his identity quest. Ten years after having left Iran, he returned and met his mother again. For Azizi, it felt like a movie scene where time froze, he could not speak. In that moment he relived everything that had happened to him and wished he had never left his mother. That is how the organisation was able to recruit him. He found his identity in the People's Mujahedin of Iran organisation. He swore that he would "go and fight with the mujahedin" but would first go back to Sweden and say goodbye to his adoptive parents. Upon his return in Sweden, while he waited for his passport renewal, he had time to think and reflect upon his ideas and thoughts. He realised he could decide of his own future and never left Sweden again.

He applied to the Swedish Police Academy and has been with the police force for 8 years. He worked in the vulnerable suburb of Rinkeby, just outside Stockholm. Azizi always wanted to work with young people. The estimates are that 800 individuals who have left Sweden to join ISIS. Police believe that about 5,000 extremists with the potential to turn to violence live in this area. Azizi pointed out, however, that **the biggest problem is not extremism but poverty and a lack of sense of belonging.** There is little cooperation with the police. In this environment, young people can do whatever they want and can rapidly become easy recruits for terrorist organisation, as he once was.

Azizi works with young people to help them believe in the future and to become part of Swedish society. He invites them to different places, outside of their neighbourhood, so they can be part of society. It really works. The young people with whom the police authorities invest time give positive results. Azizi has seen it daily. **While most of the time the Swedish media do a good job in their reporting, their approach remains problematic. Their reporting looks at problems**

**from above. Even when the media intend to report on something positive, they almost always begin with the problem. And the people in the community feel like they are the problem..**

Some people cannot see the difference between media and police. They will blame society in general for the way media is reporting. And from a community police perspective it is important to act when the media is failing on reporting accurately. Then community police have to arrange meeting with the community and explain the police's side of the story.

In other cases, there are journalists who only want to report 'juicy' stories so they can sell more papers. For example when international media are coming they almost get disappointed at how calm the area is.

Azizi explained that for some of his colleagues who monitor criminal organisations and gangs, their work could be significantly affected by media reporting, especially around building cooperation.

**When a journalist writes a story, it can have a strong impact on how much harder police work becomes and, in some cases, be ruined all together.** One example is when media publish names and other details that the police have kept secret just for protecting their investigation. Some reporting can ruin cases, and sometimes secret details can leak out from their investigation, which will result in an increased distrust of the police among people in the area.

### Violet Baert (Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis, Belgium)

Violet Baert works for the Belgian Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (CUTA). CUTA has evolved from providing strategic analysis to a coordination unit, which brings together different agencies responsible for the prevention and countering of radicalisation and terrorism in Belgium.

She outlined that Belgium has a complex and complicated political system with many different levels of power. In Belgium, Regions and Communities have specific competencies in different kinds of domains, which may be related to the prevention of radicalisation, such as youth education and welfare.

This specific area of competence belongs to the Regions and Communities, not to a federal level of competence. Baert stressed that it is vital for CUTA and the various levels of powers to work together in order to address this problem in an integrated way.

In the field of CVE, CUTA coordinates, facilitates and advises the federal, regional and local levels of authorities.

There are several working groups including various partners and one of them is strategic communications. Baert explained that when it started out, the working group examined where the government could play a role in communication and identified two areas:

1) Public information: governments at all levels of power need to speak in the same language; who does what; what works. They should communicate on their foreign policy for instance. These are important areas for government to talk about.

2) Public communication: positive messaging is what should be promoted as a government. CUTA does not believe in counter narrative coming from the government, as it is not a credible voice nor a role model.

There is a need to support and empower role models.

In public communication, CUTA has developed guidelines and recommendations. The recommendation is that a same language and terminology should be used. It means to try and raise awareness with our media partners on the impact of their coverage. It is a very difficult and sensitive topic.

These guidelines are made for different government partners on the subject of returnees and radicalisation. The most important recommendation is to adopt the same terminology. **The same terminology should be used by all levels of authorities. It is very important that the different government partners communicate in a unified voice.**

Media engagement is also important. CUTA is working towards reducing terrorist propaganda, building partnership on understanding the impact of polarisation, and bringing media awareness around the use of particular terms and labels and the impact these may have on the ground.

CUTA has informal contacts with journalists to get to know them. It does this in both a

reactive and proactive manner.

For instance, if CUTA hears and reads about a report that may jeopardise social cohesion, it invites journalists to talk about the issue and tries to create a relationship of trust with the media. It has achieved this a few times.

Once, there was a whole group of journalists asking all sorts of questions. Baert explained that it was very important to get the media a point of contact they can reach rapidly. While these practices already exist, it would be helpful to outline terminology and develop a glossary for terrorist reporting.

# KEY POINTS:
# Policing Implications Of Media Covered Terrorism

- Media coverage of terrorist attacks has an effect on law enforcement practitioners and their work. At the operational level, the way terrorist events are reported by the media, the use of certain terminology and the type of information sometimes released by the press have direct and important implications for law enforcement work such as direct, urgent investigative work, or public safety during and in the aftermath of a terrorist attack.
- At the prevention level, media reporting can hamper preventative work with communities, which is essential to the prevention and countering of violent extremism efforts.

- The publication of names and areas where suspects are living hinders police work and their ability to build trust; an absolute imperative in CT deliverability.

- Media reports, such as those describing suburbs such as those of Rinkeby in Sweden as a "No go Zone" or Molenbeek in Belgium such as the "hell hole of jihadism", are over generalisations and dangerously harmful. At a law enforcement practitioner level, it makes the work of police officers increasingly hard, endangering communities' trust in front line practitioners and partnerships so essential to prevention work. Police officers find themselves having to explain to the communities where they work that these reports are misguided. They have to reiterate that they are effectively trying to help the communities living in these areas.

- In the field of CVE, it is essential to not damage relationships in communities. In Muslim communities, the distrust in the authorities is significant and can be corrosive. It results from the fear and paranoia the communities experience as they come under heavy suspicion as a whole. Additionally, in some communities, distrust in authorities is almost about self-preservation when the authorities in their countries of origin imprison, torture and murder. The media reporting of these communities within the context of terrorism therefore can be problematic and has the potential effect of reinforcing communities' existing views and sentiments of distrust they may have towards authorities.

- Front line law enforcement practitioners have identified trust building and active partnerships as key in the prevention and countering of violent extremism work, which in turn will assist in disabusing community paranoia and conspiracy theories.

- Front line practitioners work is severely impacted when political discourse or media reporting feed into communities' conspiracy mindset. This disconnection and often contradicting discourses and realities at the national and at the grassroots levels effect PVE AND CVE efforts.

- Understanding the pressures the communities are experiencing is vitally important to front line law enforcement practitioner work. Good and effective PVE, CVE and CT work relies on community trust and partnership. For communities to feel they protect their stake in society and build community trust and partnership, they need to be provided with a safe framework.

- The relationship between law enforcement and media is an important one. Within law enforcement there needs to be a comprehensive approach on how the police manages within its own structures its relationship with the media and how it manages information.

- Although a difficult and very sensitive topic, there is an urgent need to raise awareness with media partners on the impact of their coverage. The business needs of media need to be balanced with maintaining credibility, especially during this period of 'fake news' and populist politics.

- Terminology is important. There needs to be a clear understanding of terminology and a responsible use of the terminology. All levels of government authorities and media should use the same terminology, for mutually agreed benefit.

- Labels are particularly unhelpful, counter productive and in some cases alienating. The way the media and political discourse uses labels to speak of terrorism and the communities, contribute to polarisation and division rendering the work of front line practitioners particularly difficult with the concerned communities.

- **In addition to the problematic use of labels in terrorism media reporting, media overgeneralisation creates confusion as to what terrorism is and who terrorists are. It is about criminal activity, about individuals and organisations. It important to understand that it is not about communities but about individuals within communities. The role of communities needs to be clearly understood and demonstrably so, in order to counter politically pervasive rhetoric that harms pragmatic CT work.**

# SESSION THREE:
# MEDIA TERRORISM REPORTING AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH POLICING IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIA COVERED TERRORISM (YOUTH PRACTITIONERS' AND YOUTH PERSPECTIVES)

*Discussion on the effects of media coverage of terrorist attacks on youth practitioners' work and youth mental health.*

### Alyas Karmani (Street, UK)

"We all hate to be profoundly misunderstood, and generally think we are inherently good, I live in a self-affirming world, narratives reinforce my worldview". How they view the world can be self-limiting, they don't challenge group think, they don't challenge with critical thinking. We all hate to be profoundly misunderstood. A failure to understand a common humanity is a failure."

Stigma is a social construct to dehumanise, which is used to brand and identify. Alyas Karmani explained how we create constructs of others and in the context of terrorism the ultimate "other" is the Muslim man.

After the 7/7 bombing, it took one year before Karmani could step again into an underground train. He sat down with his luggage on the train and noticed that nobody sat next to him. He kept telling himself in that instant "please someone sit next to me and humanise me". Someone at that precise moment pressed the emergency alarm and everyone bolted out. From a full carriage, he found himself alone with another 3 or 4 other people. He urged to call the police if there was a problem. This was a serious instance in light of what could have had potentially happened. Despite being someone who is emotionally resilient, he could not help but feel shattered. Ninety-five percent of the people travelling on that train that day, mostly city people, bolted off the train. Karmani explained that this phenomenon is to be understood within the dynamics of groupthink and by which human beings can label other people and dehumanise the other.

But one man who saw Karmani's distress came up to him and whispered in his ear "not all of us think like that". He thought that "was quite an amazing human thing to do". The important question that Karmani posed was for us to think about how does one internalise such an experience.

In the context of mental health, media representation can affect mental health. It can generate stress, feelings of victimhood, frustrations and anger towards the misrepresentations and labelling of Muslims in the media. Individuals feel they are being singled out by labels, and many are ill equipped to deal effectively with this impact and differentiate the nuances.

The problem with the media is that they create caricature. Karmani explained that he no longer works with the media anymore because they create caricatures of "good Muslims versus bad Muslims, extremist Muslims versus moderate Muslims, insiders versus outsiders". These caricatures drawn by the media in the context of terrorism only adds to the quagmire of misinformation and confusion.

Karmani recounts an anecdote about a request following a terrorist incident from a reporter asking him to appear on his program. He declined the offer and offered, nevertheless, to provide some context. The reporter was in fact more interested in finding a terrorist to interview than the context that Karmani could provide to the program. "It would be good if you can get us access to a terrorist or an extremist", they asked him. They actually took him seriously when he responded that he knew a paedophile jihadist they could interview. It was like the "holly grail" of media reporting; they had found the "worst of the worst". Sadly, this is part of the media circus to which some practitioners are confronted to when critical situations arise.

How does this effect young people already ill equipped? This 'war on terror' generation. **What does this war do to young people who have been internalising for the past 17 years a daily diet of despair, hopelessness, messages from people who play to the populism as well to doom and destruction?** Since 9/11, throughout their formative years, everyday, every year, young people find themselves problematized in the media.

Communities, which are already under pressure and are under siege, are quite vulnerable as immigrants, and they struggle to deal with it. Muslims are struggling to over-

come the negative stereotypes and the media pressure on them, particularly around terrorism, and this makes them become extremely self-conscious. It is hard being young; it is hard being young and Muslim, and it is harder being young and Muslim during the war on terror.

Karmani posited an essential question "how do we deal with this 'tight rope walk' while being buffeted by extremism and having to negotiate many challenges, whether it is intergenerational, religion, identity, belonging, at the same time as being problematized?" It is important to understand how these issues are being internalised. He explained: "if you are disempowered, you gain your power by scaring white people". The problem is with being labelled a terrorist is that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is self-fulfilling when young people are starting to think that by becoming terrorists they respond to those precise labels and caricatures - "I will come down to the underground and do the swagger, be threatening and a menace, because it gives me power over you".

While media plays an important role in this process, consent of the perception of the other has been manufactured by a whole range of social agencies such as through schools, through socialisation and television programming. The American blockbuster 'True Lies' is for example one of the most racist films that go to the heart of stereotypical Muslims. How is this narrative internalised by its audience and also the caricatured Muslims?

There is an urgent need to challenge and address this narrative. For Karmani, some of the solutions lie in the creation of safe spaces. Spaces where young people can have an honest conversation and the opportunity to ask anything they want to ask about Islam and Muslims.

The impact of media reporting, media caricatures and the internalisation of these misrepresentations pose serious mental health challenges. **The effects of polarisation are social exclusion, the sense of being dehumanised, the stigma, the befuddlement of how a human being does terrible things to another human being, the feeling that one is a lesser human being – how these real life consequential life experiences profoundly affect the individual need to be understood and addressed.** Unfortunately, the media contribute to reinforcing these experiences.

## David D'Hondt (School teacher, Belgium)

David D'Hondt works in a catholic school, classified as a grey level school, in Molenbeek. It is one of the most deprived schools in the city. Most of his students are of Moroccan origin and their parents came to work in Belgium in the 1960s. Unsurprisingly, youth mental health is one of the main issues in the most deprived areas in Brussels, argued D'Hondt.

As a teacher, he explained that he tries to understand what his students are exposed to in the media. He has closely monitored what type of media they watch and found that it was mostly local and national news, mainly on television. They are not exposed to Moroccan or Arabic television, as the majority do not speak Arabic. They also read the more popular newspapers.

Their reading of the world through media reporting has brought on a sense of insecurity – "they don't feel safe in their neighbourhood and in Belgium; they don't know who is in their community". D'Hont explained that his students believe that politicians are Freemasons who control the news. To counter the paranoia and the conspiracies, he tries to create in the school the objective experience of writing an article with his students.

D'Hondt identified three particular issues that affected his students and sparked much discussion in the classroom. These media encounters are not necessarily limited to traditional media but extended to other media as well, such as the Internet and advertisement. An H&M advertisement featured a black boy with a t-shirt with the writing "I am a Monkey". His students had no prior knowledge of the situation but they associated this particularly disturbing advertisement to their own daily experiences as a Muslim living in Belgium. The classroom discussion evolved around the media that represented the students in their reporting as Moroccans, and more recently as Muslims. Some adapt the discourse they hear and see on television and in the media.

The second case was about two TV programs broadcast on French and Belgian Flemish televisions about the city of Molenbeek. In the program, reporters interviewed a local unpopular imam (disliked by the majority of the students) who was presented in the report as the imam of the central mosque in Molenbeek. This imam did not speak French, required a translator and had a couple of wives.

Further on in the program, the journalist is in a police car driving around the area. The policemen received a call informing them that a robbery had taken place and they made their way to the incident, with the journalist. During his interview with the journalist, the jewellery storeowner explained that this was the fifth robbery. The journalist concluded his interview by stating that "this is another difficult night in Molenbeek". Unfortunately, this was not in Molenbeek; the incident happened in another town. Brussels is divided into different zones and at night the police would respond for the whole area, including neighbouring towns. The discussions with his students centred around their difficulties in understanding how the journalist had not crosschecked his information. These stories of the imam and the jewellery store robbery depicted an image of a dangerous and backward conservative Molenbeek; an image and a narrative with which the students could not identify themselves with and which they found disturbing and hurtful.

Finally, D'Hondt was contacted by a reporter producing a television program about Molenbeek and who was interested to show in the program the work he did in his classroom with his students.

In one of the initial meetings the journalists informed him they had a simple scenario they wanted for the program - to have the students sit in a circle and discussing with an imam, a priest and a rabbi. There is no rabbi in Molenbeek. So, D'Hondt rejected the scenario. They then asked him if another teacher would agree to sit in his place so that they could film the scenario they wanted. In the end, the only scene that was filmed was a classroom discussion. They also meet the mother of a student who had died in Syria. D'Hondt's students met this mother a couple of weeks earlier, when they went to interview her. The three students published an article in an independent newspaper about their interview. The TV program did not want to use the students' interview with the mother.

D'Hondt explained how he had found this particularly disturbing. He does not understand why the media cannot simply report on the reality on the ground. In Molenbeek, mental health issues among young people is a real issue, why is this not documented? Why is there instead this persistence of the media needing to report false realities on the ground, which have no link to his work as a teacher.

## Jounaid Hayani (MolemZap, Belgium) and Nabil Fallah (Youth worker, Belgium)

Hayani and Fallah examined the relationship between Molenbeek youth and the media, and why this relation is problematic. The feeling of young people when they first encounter media reporters in the street of Molenbeek is that they are certain there will be negative reporting about them in the neighbourhood. When interviewed by the media, not always necessarily on terrorism related issues, the youth speak honestly and openly, but very often find their intervention reduced to a few seconds with a particular emphasis on sensationalism. Hayani and Fallah explained that the media depict their generation as "bad people".

This is why, **through their accumulative experiences with the media, they do not trust journalists. The differences between what has been said and shared during the interviews and what is shown and reported on Molenbeek are so enormous that they are convinced that they can no longer trust the media. As a result, young people rarely believe what is shown in the news.**

The image that is projected in the media of young people is of young individuals hanging out in the streets doing nothing. This has an impact on their self-perception and identity as a youth. This becomes even more problematic, underlined Hayani and Fallah, when the reporting concerns young people with an ethnic background. They often are stereotyped and caricatured in the media. This has a direct impact in accessing employment and housing. The stereotyping of the Molenbeek youth as "delinquent and good for nothing" and more recently "as potential terrorists" builds up this negative image, to which potential employers are exposed to through news reporting. Although, it is not representative of the on the ground reality, it impacts on their employment prospects. This difficult environment affects youth's mental health, resulting in low self-esteem and a lack of sense of belonging. For Hayani and Fallah, this is what makes young people vulnerable. Fallah confided that he often hears young people say "I am nothing". Convinced of this, they believe they cannot achieve anything, they have no future and they hang out in the streets, or turn to anti-social behaviour or lives of crime. Their thinking follows a certain logic: "everybody thinks this way about me, because if I do something else nobody believes in me".

On the issue of the Syrian conflict and ISIS,

Fallah explained that many youth in Molenbeek and in other parts of Brussels initially did not believe or had no interest in the news reports about Syria. In their eyes, the media is untrustworthy. However, because of the multitude of stories that were published about the war in Syria, increasingly the youth became interested in finding out whether these were accurate. This is the moment during which Fallah believes ISIS preachers could have an impact and manipulate the narrative. "Look what they are saying about you; you are nothing; you mean nothing. They stereotype you. Why would you make an effort to prove that you are not that? Look at what they are doing to your brothers in Syria; they are saying bad things about your religion". When you ask several youths about what happened in Syria; they say that it was a religious war. Not many would say that it was originally a political war, which later morphed into a religious one. The religious narrative had a real impact on them as many left to fight for what they believed was a good cause and their religious duty.

Other segments of the Molenbeek youth, in response to the negative reporting of Molenbeek following the attacks and departures for Syria, decided they wanted to improve the image of their town and of their generation. So they created their own alternative narratives by reporting on positive stories about Molenbeek. This is how the initiative MolemZap was created to bring forward what is not reported in the news. It gives a voice to young people and helps them through their active participation in the project to improve their self-esteem. If the media can also show their interest and think about what they report in the news, such a project would be important for these young people.

### Abdi Cisman (Kolvi, Finland)

Abdi Cisman is a multicultural youth worker and works with first generation migrants. In consultation with the young people he works with, Cisman aimed to bring forward their experiences, views and concerns around the issue of media and CVE. He explained that they feel that they are not visible anywhere, not in the media nor even at school. They lack representation. They said that: "we are not represented in the media or anywhere; we don't have any role models who look like us and who can convey our experience and what we have endured in Finland and around Europe".

Words have a lot of power. Cisman described how **the youth questioned how the media and political discourse are using the words migrant and terrorism; what kind of pictures are used and what is drawn from these images, and how are these issues spoken about in the media.** They felt that when they are in the news, they are always portrayed in a negative light. When there is a bombing or terrorism, then they are in the news. No one is showing in the media how they struggled to live in Finnish society, to learn the language, how they are trying to get a job, get an education and to raise their families. The young people asked: "Where are these stories?" The media are not interested in these issues.

Cisman said that migrants are invisible in Finnish society. At school, migrants are treated unfairly. He explained that: "if you are a coloured person and a girl, the school will encourage you to become a nurse. If you are a boy of migrant background, you can go to vocational school. You cannot succeed or get a high-paying job". The media representation of migrants and terrorism that is projected to society, and the further negative portrayal of their suburbs, are impacting on the daily lives of young migrants and their peaceful integration in Finland.

He added: "despite their efforts to learn the language, getting degrees, trying to get a job; they are told that they can not give you a job because you are considered bad, because of the way you look and that you are just going to cause problems".

Finally, Cisman raised the question of terminology. What does the word terrorism mean? And how does the media use this term? For the youth, it seems that even the media is unclear in its usage of the term; but they have nonetheless understood that when the term terrorism is used it is in relation to a specific group, ie. to a black or an Arabic person.

### Virginie Andre (Deakin University, Australia)

The cumulative effect of media exposure to a violent narrative about Muslims and Islam and its internalisation have brought young Muslims to come to understand the contemporary meaning of jihad in a particular way.

Dr. Virginie Andre explained how her research has found how **young peoples' comprehension of such an important part of their faith is based on an understanding mediated both by traditional media and social media**

**and popular imagination; reducing a complex belief to a single meaning that is of war.** Thus, often ignoring the greater jihad – the struggle to self-betterment. The great majority of the interviewed young Muslims in Thailand, France, Belgium and the United Kingdom only heard of jihad for the very first time through national and international news reports on television or on social media, often reinforcing the same meaning of jihad propagated by violent extremist groups such as ISIS. Dr. Andre described this phenomenon as a mediated jihad.

Her findings revealed that young Muslims' understanding of the concept of jihad emphasises on armed conflict, violence and war. A limited number of research participant youth have referred to the notion of great jihad when discussing the meaning of jihad. When asked about where they had heard for the first time the word jihad, the majority of the participants indicated it was through mainstream traditional media as well as social media.

This mediated concept of jihad is not unproblematic as within violent jihadist ideology, it is often associated to a certain notion of heroism of our modern times, to which many young men and women identify to. Interviews with radicalised minors have shown **that it not just social media that have the power to radicalise vulnerable at risk youth but also traditional media in their, sometimes skewed, reporting of terrorist incidents.** In a research interview, a young ISIS female minor supporter, detained on terrorism charges in Belgium, explained how she turned to ISIS after having followed a documentary about ISIS and the conflict in Syria on a French national television channel. A former English Defence League member recounted to Dr. Andre how he progressively radicalised after reading English tabloids reporting on terrorism, migration and Muslims, and how it pushed him to join the EDL and become an active member. Dr. Andre concluded by observing that few alternative narratives, if at all, are available to at risk youth in traditional media, let alone in social media, which could assist in reshaping their understanding and perceptions of jihad, and effectively detaching its meaning from the violent extremist narratives such as those of ISIS. **These alternative narratives, however, to be effective need to be developed from bottom up, in partnership with communities and the youth themselves.**

# KEY POINTS: Media Terrorism Reporting And Youth Mental Health Policing Implications Of Media Covered Terrorism

- The use of double standards in identifying and attributing blame when reporting on terrorism is impacting negatively on communities and young people. Addressing the issue of double standards in terrorism reporting and political discourse would assist in lessening stigmatisation.

- Media and governments should use a clear standard definition of terrorism.

- A better understanding of the practical implications and practical outcomes of the use of the word terrorism needs to be developed in order to reduce its negative impact.

- The lack of content in terrorism reporting creates caricatures and stigma, reinforces certain groupthink narratives.

- An increase of reporters' local and on the ground knowledge and expansion of their local networks, and a better news contextualisation will assist in a more balanced reporting on terrorism related issues.

- Representatives of diverse religions and different voices to represent the diverse communities are needed for better a media representation and more balanced stories.

- The application of double standards in reporting terrorism and the negative framing of young people, of their communities and of their neighbourhoods has resulted in a lack of trust in the media.

- The decline in confidence in media and governments is creating a vacuum, which makes it easier for violent extremists to manipulate the narrative for their own end and at the same time makes the recruitment of young people possible.

- The double standards in terrorism reporting not only benefits terrorist organisations such as ISIS but it also plays right into the hands of the far right. The far right has proven in the last decade to be particularly effective in its communication strategy, using new reports about migration and terrorism to mobilise and generate discussions on their social media platforms.

- It is important to understand that like social media, traditional media have also the power to radicalise.

- There needs to be media awareness of how stories impact on the mental health, livelihoods and wellbeing of young people, and what are their internalised consequences.

- Terrorism reporting can generate stress, feelings of victimhood, frustrations and anger towards the misrepresentations and labelling of Muslims in the media. Individuals feel they are being singled out by labels, and many are ill equipped to deal effectively with this impact and differentiate the nuances.

- Muslim communities and young people are struggling to overcome the negative stereotypes and the media pressure on them, particularly around terrorism, makes them become extremely self-conscious and vulnerable.

- Media and language play a significant role towards youth identity formation.

- In some instances, media reports on terrorism have sparked the interest of young people to find out more about the issue and for some have paved the way to their radicalisation.

- The creation of safe spaces where young people can have an honest and safe conversations is essential the toxic narratives.

- Participatory media offer a space for young people to report on their communities and put forward positive stories and at the same time assist them in (re)gaining self esteem.

# SESSION FOUR:
# TERRORISM, MEDIA AND POLICY-MAKING (POLICY-MAKERS PERSPECTIVES)

### Jessika Soors (City of Vilvoorde, Belgium)

Jessika Soors works in a city just outside of Brussels, with a diverse community, which is experiencing similar issues as the cities of Antwerp and Brussels but at a much smaller scale. The city of Vilvoorde became known since 2012 for its high departure rates of individuals to join the conflict in Syria and in Iraq. In 2013, she was appointed by the city to develop a CVE local policy, which centres on a local multi-agency approach and entails cooperation between the City, the civil society sector and local law enforcement. Through this approach, the official policy plan developed by the City has been endorsed and adopted by their civil society partners and local law enforcement agencies. The sense of ownership and partnership with civil society and law enforcement agencies in the development of a CVE local policy has been essential.

The City's relationship with the media, on the other hand, has been challenging at different occasions.

Soors gave the example of the relationship between the city of Vilvoorde and the terror attack in Barcelona in 2017, which was covered by the media. It is through the media coverage of the incident that they became aware of the involvement of a man named Es Satty in the preparation of the Barcelona attacks. The following day, the city's task force realised it was the same man who had come to their local mosque in search of a job. The mayor of Vilvoorde, Hans Bonte, intervened publicly in the press to ensure they could remain in control of the information of how Vilvoorde was connected to Barcelona. A media storm ensued the following days and weeks, and had to face significant harassment from the Spanish press as well as invasion of privacy.

With this example, Soors wanted to show how a local city could become part of an international media storm.

The consequences of the media coverage impacted more severely on the Vilvoorde's

mosque. While allegations were made by the media of connections between the Vilvoorde mosque and terrorism, such connection have never been established, nor proven to exist. An email exchange between a local law enforcement officer from Vilvoorde and his Catalonian counterpart was literally published in international newspapers. The irresponsible media reporting drawing connections between the Barcelona attack and the city of Vilvoorde has had severe implications for the work of local authorities in the prevention and countering of violent extremism at the local level, and the ownership of civil society of the local action plan. Furthermore, the local authorities are confronted by their citizens, who impacted by this coverage in their daily lives.

**Soors argued that the media have a significant impact on their work. While it can impact on their work negatively; it can also, at occasion, increase the visibility and the positive impact of the work they are doing.**

The local task force does not focus their communication efforts in the online space but rather offline – on a local face-to-face communication strategy.

**There are some credible voices present in the media but these voices are not always connected, nor representative, of the target audiences they need to reach.** As authorities, they need to function as an echo chamber at the local level and to be a communicator between the media and the local public, so that the local public feels represented by the narratives the city echoes in the media and vice versa that the city discloses narratives available in media that do not automatically always reach the local public.

A first example of this communication strategy is the communication the City developed around an article written in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attack. The authorities noticed that many school children felt uneasy with the "Je Suis Charlie" solidarity statement in response to the attacks. Then followed an opinion piece written by a Muslim in which he expressed how he did not feel like "Charlie" at the time of the attacks but more like "Ahmed", the police officer who was killed in the attack. Ahmed was portrayed as a police officer who had been offended in the past by the Charlie Hebdo cartoons but who, at the same time, was killed for simply doing his duty as a police officer as he was protecting the victims of the attack.

So the Vilvoorde local authorities ensured that the school children would have access to this alternative message by disseminating this opinion piece.

Soors then focused her attention on explaining how media and policy feed into each other, and how media can create opportunities to create a balance view on matters of importance. **When they talk about target audience, their local people do not recognise themselves in media reporting about terrorism or radicalisation. It is unfortunate because the media could be a great resource for this prevention, by showing more positive examples of people who are at risk of radicalisation, yet choose a different path.** The My Jihad documentary, produced by a national Belgian broadcaster, is a positive example where reporters gave room for alternative voices in Vilvoorde. They interviewed several youth in Vilvoorde who were close to the foreign fighters, and allowed them to speak out about how they felt on radicalisation and about the fact that, although most of the attention in the media focused on those who have radicalised, they are the ones who have not. This allowed them to create an alternative narrative. Until today, this documentary is still used as an educational resource in school classrooms.

The Vilvoorde youth who took part in the documentary are still proud that they were part of it; they were given some responsibility and a voice in this debate.

Another point Soors stressed was about how rarely we have the opportunity to hear from the Muslim community. Very often voice is given to blunt politicians and their views, but everyday citizens are rarely heard. **To have a balanced take on these matters, communication strategies are needed at the local policy level and realistic stories have to be pushed to the forefront.** She called for a stronger support for moderate media voices.

Media can also be used to create international awareness on issues that local politicians ignore. For instance, what will happen with the children of foreign fighters? Thanks to an article published an international media, the city was able to bring the attention of the Belgian government to an issue it has been ignoring for quite some time. **The media can also play a role in the prevention programs local authorities are engaging in by bringing to the light issues that are ignored by governments.**

Media sensationalism and polarisation, and the emotions their reporting exerts on individuals, have a direct impact on the ground. For instance, the decision of the City of Vilvoorde to set up a refugee centre at the peak of the Syrian refugee crisis was highly mediatised. Shortly after, swastikas and racist slogans appeared on public buildings and on traffic signs.

Soors advocates for moral standards on how media report on terrorism related issues. In addition to the principle of the freedom of the press, the do no harm principle should be foremost on how and what media can write about. The very success of what CVE and PVE work focuses on the do no harm principle.

# KEY POINTS: Terrorism, Media And Policy-Making

- Polarisation as a result of media reporting has a real social impact, and has significant implications for the prevention work of local authorities at the grassroots level. The individuals that media choose to give airtime to, such as politicians or certain individuals, may contribute to reinforcing certain polarising narratives, as they often focus on extreme narratives.

- How to depolarise media reporting? Often politicians or certain individuals with particular opinions are given a platform to express themselves. In an increasingly media driven society, there is an urgent need to provide a platform for the middle part of society, which often has a different and less polarising narrative to offer and of which media reporting would benefit wider society and lessen the effect of polarisation.

- Local authorities can act as an echo chamber and a conduit to channel information between the media and the local public, and vice versa. This way, the local public can feel represented by the narratives the city echoes in the media and the city can disclose narratives available in media that do not automatically always reach the local public and debunk some of the more problematic media narratives.

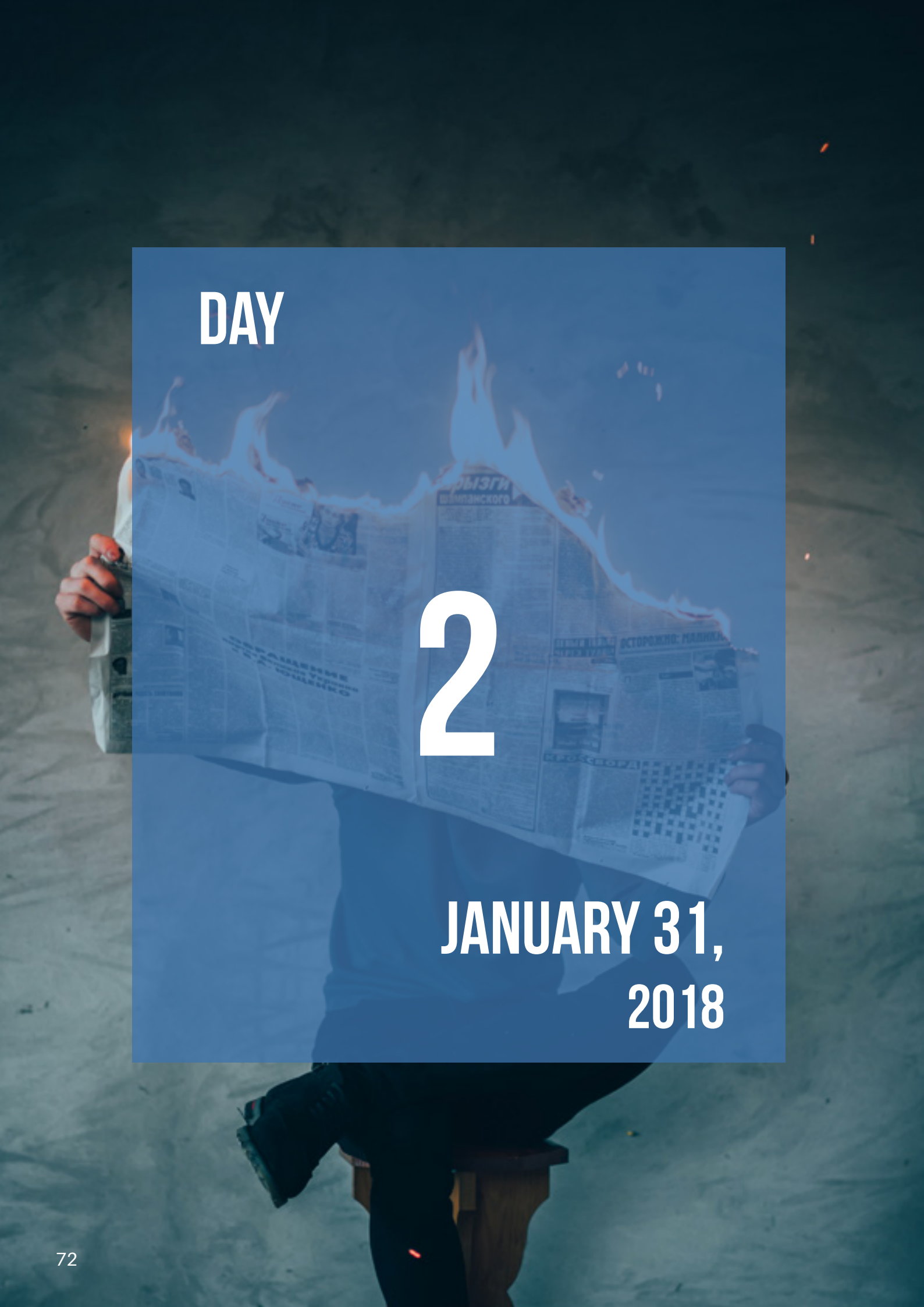
- Media and policy feed into each other. The media can create opportunities to develop balance views on matters of importance.

- The media can positively assist in the prevention and the countering of violent extremism by providing space for more moderate media voices and soft narratives. For instance, the reporting on more positive examples of people who are at risk of radicalisation, and who yet choose a different path, would contribute to the efforts of PVE and CVE.

- Media can assist in creating international and national awareness on issues that national governments and local authorities may ignore. For instance, the current issue around the returning of children of foreign fighters is one that some governments have chosen to ignore. By bringing it to the forefront, the media can also assist in setting national political agenda and indirectly assist in the prevention work local authorities are engaged in.

- On the ground efforts and professional behaviours in the prevention and countering of violent extremism can be impacted by media polarisation and the emotions it generates.

- In conducting their work, local authorities have developed important relationships based on trust, respect and confidence with their vulnerable citizens and vulnerable families. Media reporting can have a detrimental impact on those relationships and increase the vulnerabilities of at risk individuals and families.



# DAY 2

## JANUARY 31, 2018

# SESSION ONE:
# FEARING TERRORISM: THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF TERRORIST ATTACKS ON COMMUNITIES (CVE PRACTITIONERS AND COMMUNITIES PERSPECTIVES)

*Discussion on the effects media coverage of terrorist attacks may have specifically on communities and the challenges it poses to CVE practitioners in their work with communities.*

**Robert Örell (Exit Sweden/EU RAN Exit, Sweden)**

Robert Örell began with a case from a news coverage of the Swedish neo-Nazi party - the Swedes Party (formerly National Socialist Front). The party was mobilising for the Swedish elections in 2014, aiming for seats in several municipalities. Building up for the election, the party collected campaign funds through donations from their members and supporters. Their campaigns consisted of propaganda of different sorts (flyers, banners, online platforms, etc.), marches and meetings in squares around Sweden, particularly in the southern parts of the country. The goal was to gain political influence through the elections and become the first Nazi party since the Second World War with elected representatives in Swedish municipalities.

Surrounding the party's campaigning were counter demonstrations in large numbers and the attention of media, police presence and diverse crowds protesting and marking their resistance to the group. **A common strategy in right-wing extremist groups is to see all attention as good attention.** Meaning that even if there are numerous protests against the party, disturbance of any sort or even violence, the party still appreciates the attention and the opportunity to spread their messages through media, social media and spectators.

The specific example Örell focused on was during the campaign when the party came to a smaller town in southern Sweden. They gathered with a small group of activists on a Saturday for their election tour. They planned a meeting on the main square and as usual expected there would be crowds of counter demonstrations, police and media.

The group set up their stands and prepared for the meeting.

As the clock came closer to the start of the activity, it seemed more and more clear that there was no one showing up, no media, no counter protesters, no supporters. At the time the event started, the party spokesman stood in front of an empty square. The failure and humiliation were complete. The event was covered by a lonely journalist who kept distance to the scene and took a photo from the other side of the square, writing a piece in the local paper about the demonstration that never was.

All political party's wanted members and attention, **being faced with an empty square the group faced a total face loss. Being so uninteresting is the worst for groups seeking attention at all costs.**

The second part of Örell's presentation focused on the role of formers. When discussing violent extremism, few people have the insights and perspectives as formers have. Formers are individuals whom once were actively involved in violent extremism and later left their involvement and returned to a life in society again. Formers are a diverse group of individuals with important ranges in experiences, age, gender, difference in groups and backgrounds. Formers from the same environments and groups can have experienced their involvement differently.

Their testimonies not only give the public insights and understanding of how terrorists, violent extremists and similar groups functions, reasons and operates, it also gives insight in the role of the ideology in the group. As well as what attracts new members and how contradictions can be used to create discrepancies for involved members or possible victims of recruitment. Formers also know how to prevent involvement in the groups and what might be more effective when it comes to creating counter responses to involvement in violent extremism. However, in communication formers give important perspectives to share since they often can present credible inside perspectives and share real lived experiences from the life inside the groups. By sharing the different aspects of being involved, and especially the destructive, contradictory events and consequences of their engagement, it becomes evident what involvement in violent extremist groups means on a practical level. Something that usually helps in preventative interventions with young people who are on their way into extremist groups and seldom have the overview and clear picture

of what an involvement means socially, personally, emotionally and relationally. When involving formers, it is important that we as the surrounding society help the people leaving extremism to get enough time, space and support to work through their experiences and mature into the role of becoming a former. Most formers want to leave the whole experience, continue with their life and not look back. And for those who want to use their experiences and history as tools for interventions, they need guidance, practice and context to work within.

If the shift from bad guy to former happens too fast, with little or total lack of self-reflection and personal development, there is a risk that the process of change becomes too hastily and shallow, and does not reach the depth and needs it requires for transformation and development to take place.

Formers have a great opportunity to help us understand involvement in violent extremist groups from an inside perspective and what might help when planning prevention and interventions.

### Ahmed Rehab (CAIR Chicago, USA)

Ahmed Rehab first outlined the importance of acknowledging the variety of media – those with a certain political agenda (eg. left wing, right wing, neutral), and those with no political agenda, or which identify as simply reporting the news without opinion or excessive editorialising.

In increasingly polarised media driven societies, Rehab explained that balanced reporting was essential. **In the current media terrorism narrative, Muslims continue to be presented as natural perpetrators of terrorist and violent extremist attacks.** This narrative is both problematic and false. The FBI reported that 74% of terrorist acts on Western soil between 1995 and 2004 were not commited by Muslims. Between 2004 and 2016, there was twice the number of home-grown white supremacist attacks than Muslim terrorist attacks or foreign Muslim attacks in the United States. Based on these figures, **Rehab emphasised that associating Muslims with terrorism is a concocted narrative based on selective data and disproportionate coverage.**

Notwithstanding the problematic media misrepresentation of Muslims, Rehab pointed out that it is essential to understand the nature of media, the 24-hour news cycle and how it intersects with these types of coverage

There are so many hours to fill and so many ads to sell.

In the media environment, competition is tough. Every news agency wants to be first and fears of missing out on headlines. Rehab explained that: **"What bleeds reads. Something like a terrorist attack and its entire exotic context is of interest to readers. The media pursue this type of stories as a priority in all its figure and intensity".**

It is not only a case of what bleeds, leads, but also what lead is prolonged. That is, the 24-hour news industry intrinsically seeks relevance and audience attention by prolonging stories and providing different angles, which often veer well beyond the actual crime reported. The "Islamic terrorism" narrative provides analysis-rich fodder for the constant stream of opinion-based news talk shows on television and radio, as well as op-ed columns in newspapers.

The way the Muslim community in the United Stated is pulled into various aspects of reporting can be illustrated through a concentric circle diagram of identity. Rehab argued that the human identity can be illustrated as the wider circle. Within that larger circle are circles representing faith identities – Muslim, Christian or Jew – is reported. Further into the identity circle, extremism (not necessarily violent extremism) emerges as relatively small circles, then violent crime and terrorism emerge as even smaller circles within those. Media reporting does not concern itself with the human circle, the level at which good and evil occurs on the individual level. They will zoom in and out from the small extremist and terrorism circles (where communal evil occurs) to the much wider Muslim circle implicating hundreds of millions of non-aggressors. So basically, they neither focus on the inner circle nor the outer circle; they invariably are drawn to the middle circle, particularly and even exclusively in the case of Muslims. Rehab argued that it is the Muslimness that becomes the focus of media coverage of the criminal acts of individuals or organised groups. He pointed out that **there is a double standard between reporting on violent extremist acts committed by Muslims and those by people of other backgrounds.**

Rehab gave a personal example of how this misplaced attention affected daily lives of Muslims. One morning he was watching CNN, and noted that the caption at the bottom of the television screen, which read: "Is Muslims. One morning he was watching CNN, and noted that the caption at the bottom of the television screen, which read: "Is Islam a

violent religion?" The question was posed by serious journalists to serious talking heads. That segment, which is not considered an outlier, basically means that the problem we are dealing with becomes folks like himself, his wife, his mother, his friends, his children; they are being debated on TV as a result of the criminal act of someone they never met. Their beliefs and their religion, and their identities are pulled in as an accessory to someone's abhorrent violent act which took them by surprise as much as everybody else. Rehab explained that the job of Muslims is then "to constantly play catch up, to do damage control, and to condemn obvious heinous crimes."

He provided some additional examples of problematic media reporting on terrrorism. In December 2016, a Muslim man and his wife committed an act of lone wolf terrorism, which was reported as a terrorist attack motivated by ISIS.

The media had access to the couple's home with two-dozen reporters rummaging through their personal belonging. Rehab recollected how it reminded him of programs on the Discovery channel – "it was like the spectator was walked through the habitat to see the animals". The reporting was particularly intrusive and at some point it focused on a copy of the Quran and on a prayer mat, a mundane finding that should be expected at any Muslim home, not unlike a cross at a Christian home. He was shocked to see that an ordinary prayer mat like his and a book that he and pretty much every Muslim reads like the Quran were held up by reporters to the cameras as some kind of significant find. **By focusing their attention on the Quran and the prayer mat, the media created this implicit relationship between all 1.5 billion Muslims and the small fraction of 1% that resorts to terrorism.**

### Tony McAleer (Life After Hate, Northern America)

Tony McAleer focused on the unbalanced media reporting of violent extremism in the United States, especially when a white supremacist commits a terror attack. He explained that issues of "soul-searching" or "mental health" often associated with white supremacist extremist violence are never highlighted if the violence is committed by a Muslim extremist thus informing people that the underlying driver behind the extremist actions is Islam itself.

McAleer screened several videos, which provided counter narratives. The first video has

the voice over: "Since 911, White Supremacists have killed more people on US soil than ISIS, Al Queda and the Taliban combined" and offer outreach with no judgement, just help" www.lifeafterhate.org/exitusa

**For McAleer, many of the drivers for people to join violent extremism are related to toxic shame.** Toxic Shame can be defined as an impaired sense of self that manifests at the subconscious level that often results from emotional, physical or sexual trauma) and those are the factors that contribute to vulnerabilities.

Toxic Shame is a lousy predictor because of the multitude of ways in which it expresses. The university of Maryland's START program (Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism) found that the number one correlated factor in the history of someone joining an extremist group is childhood trauma. He distinguished collective shame from individual shame. Collective shame is when one is made to feel "less than" because of who one is (ethnic/religious identity) and not for what one has personally done. This collective shame is instrumentalised through Islamaphobia, and is also experienced by African Americans, Native Americans, and even White American. **The danger with media reporting is that it contributes to that collective shame by making people and communities feel less worthy because of whom they are and not what they have done. It reinforces collective shame and vulnerabilities.** In some cases, the media are not only responsible for bad reporting but they are also exacerbating problems.

### Abdelkader Railane (Mission Locale/COPEC, France)

Abdelkader Railane argued that news media coverage of terrorism events has evolved in the last few years; it is no longer critical or objective. It is much more focused on emotional appeal. He then posed the question of how news reporting could turn young people to radicalisation. For Railane, the confusion and polarisation that French media create, especially in relation to young people, calls for media education.

Based on his professional practitioner experience with at risk youth, he observed that broadcasting report of terrorism could lead to different interpretations of the reported news.

For instance, live news coverage of the killing of a terrorist like Mohamed Merah, for many French people, is considered as positive news – "it was a good ending; the killer was killed". But young people feel differently during these events. While the media explained that the terrorists resisted and fought the police, it was perceived by the youth as an "act of bravery". Railane argued that this type of media coverage created a type of "Stockholm syndrome", particularly in certain neighbourhood. In the case of Mohammed Merah, French media have contributed greatly to this particular interpretation. **The media frenzy that surrounded the coverage of the Mohamed Merah's attempted arrest and subsequent killing elevated his stature to one of a terrorist martyr.** Having witnessed live the police shooting a Muslim resisting arrest made the jihadist popular for some young people. He shot at the police 13 hours before being shot himself and killed. During the raid, Merah said that he was the messenger of Allah and that he wanted to join Allah. In light of this effect of this coverage on young people, the important question for Railane was whether this frenzy and extensive detailed coverage really necessary?

A second example Railane discussed was the news coverage of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks. The detailed media coverage of the attacks and the media frenzy had the same effect as with the Merah case – it conferred the terrorists the status of martyr. **In the eyes of some young people, the terrorists gained that stature because they were defending the prophet.** The media depicting the terrorist's calm demeanour and their efficiency further reinforces this image. Young people talked about them as "real men" or as being "really brave". The news coverage of the raid created empathy with the terrorists.

Finally, Railane argued that the media coverage of the 2014 Brussels Jewish museum terrorist attack comparatively did not have the same effect. In the eyes of the youth, the terrorist Mehdi Nemmouche did not achieve the same stature. This can be explained by the more limited media coverage at the time, which presented Nemmouche simply as a terrorist.

The excessive coverage of the 2015 Bataclan attack in France has shown how media coverage can have a negative impact on certain people's behaviour. Drawing on the previous patterns of youth support to martyred terrorists such as Merah, Railane argued that the same excessive media coverage of the Bataclan attacks would have bolstered certain youth and would have identified with the perpetrators of the attacks.

Finally, Railane concluded that in light of the significant effect media coverage of terrorist events has on people, and young people more particularly, governments have a responsibility to provide media education to society and young people.

# KEY POINTS: FEARING TERRORISM: THE EFFECTS OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF TERRORIST ATTACKS ON COMMUNITIES

- Media reporting on terrorism should offer opportunities and platforms for the silent majority to engage in the public debate.

- Terrorism should be reported in a non-extraordinary and balanced manner such that people do not find themselves in a binary polarising standpoint position.

- The 24-hour news cycle and how it intersects with terrorism and violent extremism news coverage need to be better understood in order for the media to have an effective role in the prevention and countering of violent extremism.

- In the current media terrorism narrative, Muslims continue to be presented as natural perpetrators of terrorist and violent extremist attacks. This narrative is both problematic and false.

- The Muslim narrative helps to fill that news cycle and occupies significant time on television, in newspapers, on radio time, and in op-eds. Muslim communities are pulled into various aspects of reporting in a way that alienates communities and reinforces a sense of victimisation.

- Many of the drivers for people to join violent extremism are related to shame. Collective shame is when one is made to feel worthless because of who one is and not for what one has done. The danger with media reporting is that it contributes to that collective shame by making people and communities feel less worthy because of whom they are and not what they have done.

- There is a disproportionate reporting between violent extremist acts committed by violent Islamic extremist groups and far right extremist groups.

- News media coverage of terrorism events has evolved in the last few years, focusing much more on emotional appeal, which can lead to polarisation and the glorification of terrorism by some.

- Excessive and detailed media coverage of terrorist attacks can bolster at risk youth, generate support for terrorism and transform criminals into heroes.

- In light of the significant effect media coverage of terrorist events has on people, and young people more particularly, governments have a responsibility to provide media education to society and young people.

# SESSION TWO:
# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PRACTITIONERS PERSPECTIVES

*Discussion on the role and effect media coverage of terrorist attacks may have specifically on the development of effective strategic communication the field of preventing and countering violent extremism.*

**Jonathan Russell, (Breakthrough Media / EU RAN, United Kingdom)**

Jonathan Russell focused on the importance of understanding media reporting of terrorist events in the absence of clear messages from the government sector, academics analysing the situation, and civil society actors presenting a message of hope. The media can amplify the messages from each of the three actors (government, academic and civil society actors). **The terrorist group can also amplify the messages from these three actors for their own communication strategy as part of the terrorist event itself.** Terrorist event reporting can open our eyes on different actors, the good and the bad in a same environment.

What the audiences consume in the moment of a terrorist attack should also be forefront. According to Russell, from a strategic communication position and from a civil society actors' position, there must be a focus on communicating purely with their audiences.

Specifically, to focus on the message one wants to resonate with them or going to if there is this complexity. For instance, Russell explained how the far right's strategic communication and its effect is entirely predictable and how planning around to respond to it is possible. Therefore planning how to respond can be built into a strategic communication that looks into what is s not controllable but predictable.

When focusing on a media reporting position, there are two important points. First is to reconsider the media's responsibility in the current information environment given how complex it is and making sure that there is an open conversation.

Government may not necessarily be leading in the conversation but the media understands that in its tireless pursuit of objectivity and holding power into account that they have a responsibility.

In particular, the media need to understand

the complex power struggle involved in a terrorist event. Second, how do audiences receive information after a terrorist act knowing that there are competing powers and strategic communication actors?

With this in mind, Russell asked us to consider the communications environment after a terrorist incident. As regards the Westminster attack in 2017, we now know that: 2 hours before the incident, the perpetrator shared with his contact list supposed theological justification for his actions; 4 hours after the incident, Daesh claimed credit for it; and in the intervening time, far-right extremist and influencer Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (under his brand / pseudonym Tommy Robinson) livestreamed his analysis of events, framing the incident through his far-right narratives; there was an disinformation campaign based on a female Muslim passer-by orchestrated by the Kremlin-backed Internet Research Unit; and several UK-based Islamist groups also took the opportunity to promote a victimhood narrative about the seemingly inevitable backlash that their audiences (Muslim communities) would face as a result of the attack. While governments, media, and CVE stakeholders might also look to communicate, others are able to do so quickly and often to the opposite effect. The media might well be tempted to report on or feature any of these voices, without first considering their ideological or political motivation. From a communications perspective, Russell distinguished four main objectives (for CVE strategic communications practitioners) in responding to terrorist events:

1. Preventing copy cat violence;
2. Preventing reciprocal violence (The first two focus on violence after Islamist attack and preventing far right reciprocal attack);
3. Disrupting propaganda and ensure that terrorist do not achieve getting the strategic effect from terrorist attack, or achieve polarisation of all communities and all audiences, which is what terrorist is trying to achieve in general.
4. Thinking through terrorist event and how does the media unwittingly deliver the strategic effects, what the media is absolutely empowered to do itself.

Reassuring the public and reducing fear by showing the positive action taken by CVE stakeholders including governments, Russell gave the example of Mohammad Emwazi or more commonly known through the media as Jihadi John. In fact, very few people know of his real name. The Daily mail called him Jihadi John. **This humanised him, gave him a personality, and became a symbol - a British Jihadist that individuals could personally glamorise.**

Emwazi died in a drone attack. Russell argued that whether one knew Emwazi's name or not, one knew of Jihadi John and one could draw him. One could picture his knife in an angle and his orange jumpsuit. Through the ISIS video of Emwazi beheading a journalist, he became Jihadi John. Unintentionally, the video made a symbol of Emwazi, and other media organisation by diffusing his image made him more than just a man. He is a symbol that survives, and has become a Jihadist Che Guavara. **It is a dangerous power the media holds in making heroes and foes, and the appeal it exerts to anti-establishment elements.**

In the case of the Boston bomber, four months after the Boston marathon attack in 2013, **Dzhokhar Tsarnaev achieved what many musicians failed to do, he appeared on the front cover of the Rolling Stone magazine with the title "The Bomber". Rolling Stones turned him into a rock star.**

Michael Adebolajo who killed British army soldier Rigby Lee in the street of Woolwich waited 7.5 minutes with a knife and blood on his hands for a TV camera to turn up.

He then talked directly to the barrel of the camera and it was filmed in a position, which would have made any viewer of the video to feel like Adebolajo's victim. This, he was able to completely achieve with the unwitting complicity of the media. Channel4 news went live so that everybody could see those bloodied hands, and listen to Adebolajo deliver his justification for that terrorist event. Russell asked "who wouldn't want to get that scoop? It goes against every single bone of the journalists' body, not to be the first, not to lead the news with that". In that moment, Adebolajo achieved his strategic effect simply by making the viewer a victim.

Finally, the news coverage of the 2015 Nice terrorist attack, which claimed 85 lives differs from the previous examples. In the aftermath of the attack, the French newspaper *Le Monde* did not publish the terrorist's name. An editorial decision was made not to publish a story about the perpetrator but rather on the victims. The question is this case in how sustainable this editorial policy would be for other media to follow. Unlike *Le Monde*, another newspaper chose to publish a topless picture of the terrorist on the beach from his social media. This confirmed *Le Monde's* editorial decision not to turn him into a sex symbol with his six pack and muscly shoulders.

These are examples of the importance of media reporting in and around terrorist events. Russell argued that there is an urgent need

to work together to communicate strategically in the aftermath of a terrorist event.

### Anna Lena-Lodenus (Journalist, Sweden)

Anna Lena-Lodenus has been a journalist for more than 30 years. In Sweden, she explained terrorism is less of a problem than gang criminality and shootouts. According to Lena-Lodenus, there has been 151 gang related killings in the last seven years and 500 people were severely wounded.

Nonetheless, Sweden has not been spared by terrorism. She recalled the recent terrorist attack in 2017 during which a man plowed a stolen van through people in central Stockholm, killing 5 people and injuring 17. The media immediately draw conclusions that this was a similar attack to the ones in Nice and London. The police released a picture of the suspect through the media and within a few hours the man was apprehended as he was at a petrol station. This is a very good example of collaboration between police work and the media in the context of a terrorist attack. However, this type of collaboration is not without risk. A few years earlier, Lena-Lodenus explained that the media also published the photo of a suspected terrorist. In this case though, the man was an asylum seeker who lived in a town in northern Sweden and had nothing to do with terrorism. Reporters were unsure why the man was listed as a terrorist. The information was leaked from someone in the police to the media; it was not an official call. In this particular case, the media coverage caused the asylum seeker significant harm. Due diligence should have been performed by the media.

From a journalistic perspective, this is not acceptable. Lena-Lodenus concluded that when reporting on terrorism investigative journalism is required, to provide a context and cross check facts. Unfortunately, the reality is that more and more newsrooms have less and less financial means to conduct good investigative reporting. Investigative reporting usually requires several months of work to half a year to produce something substantial. She suggested that reporters who have conducted investigative journalism and who have contextual knowledge of events should be the ones presenting these types of news.

## Cathrine Moetsue (Psychologist, Norway)

Cathrine Moetsue started with a quote by communication scientist Robert Entman: «Journalists may follow the rules for objective reporting and yet convey a dominant framing of the news that prevents most audience members from making a balanced assessment of a situation."

"Are we loosing sight of the grey area?", she asked. In the last years of media reporting on terrorist acts, the grey zone has sometimes seemed to be shrinking. Not in the way Daesh planned, but rather, under internal pressure. Our own debate about what to do next, about how to deal with a force that we struggle to describe, let alone understand, has polarised too, as it often does at moments of great strain. Journalists and their audiences have a fundamental right to balanced information, especially when it may affect their own safety or freedom. **To what extent is coverage playing into the interests of terrorist? And to what extent does coverage tap into an existing narrative or prejudice about "who the terrorist is"?**

Professor Robert Prentice reminds us of the Challenger accident and that it was all about framing the proper perspective or rather the wrong perspective.

When engineers from Morton Thiokol first evaluated whether the space shuttle Challenger should be launched under conditions that were chillier than it had ever been tested in, they concluded that it should not. They were looking at the problem as a safety issue. When their supervisor asked them to put on their "managers' hats" (in other words, to look at the issue as one involving dollars and cents), they changed their minds and recommended launch (with disastrous results). Reframing the issue from a safety issue to a managerial issue changed their conclusion by 180 degrees.

The most important factor of a story can fade into the background if we don't ask ourselves some practical ethical questions and keep the long-term consequences in our awareness and our storyframe.
Ask: Is it true? Is it natural in the situation? Is it a win –win? Before making that savvy headline.

It should be the moral responsibility of every journalist, indeed of every individual, to keep ethical considerations in his or her own frame of reference whenever making decisions.

Robert Cialdini is author of Influence. Influence is not only a fun read, but also it is brim full of some of the best research-backed advice one will ever hear. Dr. Cialdini examines six principles as being intrinsic human responses, and explores how they are often used and abused by persuaders of all sorts, be it journalists or by recruiters. The six principles of influence are:

1. Reciprocity - When someone gives us something, we feel obligated to provide something in return.

2. Consistency - When we say we will do something or identify a certain way, we're prone to continue doing so in the future.

3. Social Proof - If we witness a crowd behaving in a specific manner, we tend to follow suit.

4. Liking - When we enjoy the presence or personality of an individual, we feel good about complying with their requests.

5. Authority – We are more likely to take instructions or oblige with the requests of individuals we perceive as established or authoritative.

6. Scarcity - The more fleeting or rare something is, the more we want it.

Rather than imploring that these influence principles should never be leveraged for democratic journalism he instead argues that we should seek to avoid using them dishonestly. It can be strategic communication tool. It helps us avoid sensationalism and take a step back from just reacting to the situation and the horror of terrorist, take a step back and to think. What is the bigger picture here and what do I want to accomplish? The most important thing is to become aware of are how frames work in communication and have insight into how we use them ourselves.

A frame is a psychological device that offers a perspective and manipulates salience in order to influence subsequent judgment.

These principles also inform us about human nature and that we are vulnerable to social forces. And interesting example of how we might miss these social forces is when we discuss the radicalised youth of Molenbeek, frequently blaming government policies, lack of immigration efforts or the low social status but it turns out that the radicalised youth were actively recruited by someone similar to them, a fellow Moroccan.

Philippe Moureaux, who served for two decades as Molenbeek's mayor, described this as "the paradox of integration." A less-integrated Turkish community has resisted the promise of redemption through jihad offered by radical zealots. Yet, a Moroccan community that is more at home in French-speaking Brussels has seen some of its young fall prey to recruiters like Khalid Zerkani, a Moroccan-born petty criminal who became the Islamic State's point man in Molenbeek (NYT, 2016). Cialdini notes (2010) that deceptive recruitment or fraud of this sort is hardly limited to one ethnic or religious group. Charles Ponzi, who gave his name to the infamous Ponzi scheme that Madoff copied, was an Italian immigrant to the U.S. who conned other Italians.

Terrorist acts are often covered with a perspective similar to the "clash of civilisations" theory. We need strategic communication because it is so easy for the media to be caught up in sensationalism playing into the hands of terrorist.

**Cathrine Moetsue's own experience with unbalanced reporting:**

In 1985, Cathrine Moetsue was a young student at the University of Stockholm. That year and there was a hunger crisis in Ethiopia and the world came together for Live Aid and USA for Africa producing famous songs like "Do they know its Christmas" and "We are the world". Her lecturer claimed to have a program to save starving children, which was a sham but she did not know this at this time. She was fascinated by his black and white logic on how to solve world problems.

She was only 19 and was slowly isolated from family and friends, recruited and then radicalised into a fanatic person who was obsessed with saving the world, until she ran away some years later in 1992. When she reads stories of radicalised youth today, she sees many similarities and one obvious one is the historic backdrop of a highly public world crisis. In 1985 it was pictures of starving children every day in the paper, but today it is the grotesque war in Syria. Young people want to help and are vulnerable to predatory alienation and recruiters that prey on these insecurities. Often made to feel guilty in contrast to people suffering. Desperate to belong and fit in, it is easy to make the first commitment that escalates into larger and larger loyalties.

The headlines were "Brainwashing and sexorgies", but the journalist

never explained what he meant by the term brainwashing and where he got the idea of sexorgies. Moetsue explained that they did not have sex in their group so it was clearly formed from the journalist stereotype view of why people came together in a group, or based on his own fantasy. She did not know. But she knew that "it did not help anyone with understanding because this headline played right into the hands of our cult leader. He used it as evidence that society lies to us, that they don't care about us, nor care about the truth".

Brainwashing and sex? A fascinating read for sure but was it true? Did it have any ethical perspective on helping us escape or heal? According to Moetsue, journalism objectivity of facts is not always that objective in that it hides the frame or the opinion of the writer. She further argued "it could be a reactive and mindless opinion that just reports the horror or the drama but in this day and age, we have to think more critically because of the security risk. We don't want terrorists to get more attention than necessary or to feed them persuasive arguments".

The way people experience anything can be changed by structuring what they experience beforehand. Moetsue outlined important questions in relations to framing:

* Ask yourself: What comparisons are naturally and genuinely available to me here?
* Have I framed my story in the proper perspective?
* Are these truly the issues? If not, Reframe!

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.

In conclusion she asked: "how can we create a win-win situation where we both inform the public but keep an eye on ethical framing? We can be both ruthless in our determination to defeat this mortal enemy and mindful of the risks. We have to be both. We have to inhabit that space that is neither black nor white, but grey".

# KEY POINTS: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PRACTITIONERS PERSPECTIVES

- More research needs to be conducted to assist with strategic communication for the media to target audience, potential supporters or audience not directly in the reach of governments and security agencies.

- In order to shift people's position, not from the extreme but towards a middle ground, alliances are key to produce this shift more effectively.

- There is an urgent need to work together to communicate strategically in the aftermath of a terrorist event.

- From a communication perspective, there are four main objectives in responding to terrorist events: 1/ preventing copy cat violence; 2/ preventing reciprocal violence (The first two is focusing on violence after Islamist attack and preventing far right reciprocal attack); 3/ disrupting propaganda and ensure that terrorist do not achieve getting the strategic effect from terrorist attack, or achieve polarisation of all communities and all audiences, which is what terrorist is trying to achieve in general; and, 4/ thinking through terrorist event and how does the media unwittingly deliver the strategic effects, what the media is absolutely empowered to do itself.

- When reporting on terrorism investigative journalism is required, to provide a context and cross check facts. Unfortunately, the reality is that more and more newsrooms have less and less financial means to conduct good investigative reporting.

- The media can help structure how people perceive certain issues depending on how the information is framed. The focus should be on the framing of the message and the context.

# SESSION THREE:
# LESSONS LEARNT AND FORMULATING POLICIES: TERRORISM AND THE MEDIA

**Hugo MacPherson (European Strategic Communication Network (ESCN), Belgium)**

Hugo MacPherson posed the questions: how governments can understand an evolving complex issue such as terrorism? How can a national security framework be created to match the pace and scale of a challenge? Are we equipped to simplify what is a complex series of events and issues? Do we know what we need to know? And, who do we need in the room to develop the right questions?

MacPherson argued that the key to using strategic communication effectively is to "get strategic", pulling together all the research, partnerships and expertise necessary to tackle the challenge.

The ESCN is Belgian government-led, based in Brussels, funded by the European Commission and supported by the British Home Office. It regularly advises 27 EU government clients to follow 7-steps to implement a basic strategic communications approach to prevention of terrorism and extremism:

1. Define the problem – what change are you trying to effect?

2. Understand the audience – who are you trying to reach and impact?

3. Create the architecture – what sectors must be involved to generate the response at a pace and scale that matches the challenge?

4. Build the partnerships – who must be involved to drive the right understanding and response?

5. Deliver the campaign – what must you to do reach and impact those you seek to influence?

6. Measure effect – how have you met your clearly-set objectives?

7. Report the success – how can you account for the money and time spent? What is your next step?

Where does the media fit? MacPherson ventured there may be opportunities for governments to develop partnerships with the media, but this is understandably fraught with difficulty. He proposed instead that, for 'defining the problem' and 'understanding the audience', there is a real opportunity for governments to better understand the media's role in the information space, particularly in the aftermath of terrorist attacks.

The ESCN was set up in 2016 with the mission to support Member States to develop unique, localised and bespoke communications capacity so that they are able to create innovative communication responses to the evolving terrorist and violent extremist communications challenges on a sustainable long-term basis.

Insights gathered from running working groups, events and direct consultancy visits so far suggest EU Member States differ in their ideas about prevention: no two-member states share the same set of problems. Wherever you are in Europe, the communications challenge is always complex and evolving.

One example of the evolving challenge is the shift in Member States' needs. Two years ago, ESCN worked exclusively to help clients identify possible solutions to radicalisation of individuals. Today, ESCN's focus also includes polarisation of communities and even the effect of disinformation on the information space.

ESCN encourages Member States to invest in a dedicated research capacity as a first step. This research capacity has to be developed to understand: "What is it that people love and hate? What do they feel about issues that matter to national security? What do they think about the war in Syria or about the immigration in this country?" This kind of detail is necessary to establish the most basic building blocks for communications to be effective, and a dedicated research capacity is needed to deliver that consistently.

ESCN explores with Member States how to develop an architecture for prevention. This is a whole-of-society approach, combining civil society insight and access on the ground, creative industry expertise in developing engaging and compelling content, and government strategy, intelligence and resource.

Using Daesh as an example to reflect on hostile terrorist communications, MacPherson said Daesh is a smart organisation with an effective strategic communication approach. This was reflected in its ability to shift its definition of success, under massive physical military pressure, from building a so-called caliphate to calling for homegrown extremist violence in Europe. Their narratives are able to exploit their audience's feelings of alienation to create division and polarisation within society: it is telling people – especially Muslims – that Muslims do not belong, cannot fit in and will never succeed in Europe and it is therefore right that they act.

ESCN's strategic communications objective then, using the 7 steps, is to reduce the impact of violent extremism propaganda, which the ESCN argues is achieved by showing that they do belong, can fit in and are already succeeding in their lives in Europe.

In this case, the media surely have a role to play in helping design and deliver this objective – the question is, how?

# ROUNDTABLE SPEAKERS AND PARTICIPANTS SHORT BIOGRAPHIES

**NAJEEB AHMED**
Prevent Coordinator, London Borough of Hounslow (UK)

Najeeb is currently employed as a Prevent Coordinator with the London Borough of Hounslow. He is also a Home Office registered Intervention Provider and was the Managing Director of WLI, an organisation established to fully understand the dynamics of government-community engagement as a strategy and setting the narrative as a need. The same allowing for an understanding of grievances, prevention of crime through knowledge transfer, understanding the influencer factors which may lead to violent extremism, political discourse and legislation. In addition to hosting many governmental delegations from across the globe, Najeeb has given presentations at international level such as at the Google HQ in New York, discussed issues pertaining to the Asian diaspora in Brussels for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the rise of hate crime in the UK and discussed the causes and evolutionary nature of violent extremism in the US, Denmark, Canada, Egypt, Austria, Poland, Germany, France and a multitude of other countries. He has recently returned from a series of presentations in the Balkans discussing grass roots intervention projects with local practitioners and law enforcement agencies and has been tasked with developing a module on cultural awareness within the framework of countering extremism for the Serbian police force. Moreover, Najeeb is responsible for delivering a program of strategically and intelligently scoped innovative projects to ensure awareness of the dangers of violent extremism reaches every element of local communities. These projects include presentations on Information and Unconscious Bias, Prevent for SEN Schools and the kNOw Extremism Project amongst others.

Finally, Najeeb has developed a number of projects allowing an understanding of negative online and offline Islamist and Far Right propaganda from a truly grass roots perspective. The programs allow for a visualisation of the imagery and videos young people may be subject to with a view to further understanding online coding used to veil the grooming process. He has identified the world of social media as not only a key tool in the armoury of extremist radicalisers, but also as a platform to build resilience and critical thinking amongst young people. The programs allow for implementation of enhanced exit strategies when engaging with identified cohorts as well as deconstructing key messages embedded in imagery and videos produced by the likes of the Far Right and IS.

## DR. VIRGINIE ANDRE

Research Fellow, Deakin University (Australia)

Dr. Virginie Andre's expertise lies in the field of religious and political globalisation, and specifically in relation to Muslim political resistance and neojihadism. Virginie has expertise in terrorism and countering violent extremism, ethno-nationalism and conflict transformation, social media and youth radicalization, and diasporic cultures in transition. She currently is working on a 5-year project to develop a broadcasting model to counter violent extremism, and a smaller comparative research project on youth and extremism in France, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Australia. In the last ten years, Dr. Andre has researched diverse communities in Southeast Asia, Europe and Australia. She was a research fellow at the Alfred Deakin Research Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, from 2014 to 2018, and at the Global Terrorism Research Centre, Monash University, from 2012 to 2014. Dr. Andre was also editorial manager of the Islam and Christian Muslim Relations Journal from 2011 to 2018. She's an associate researcher with the CNRS funded Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est Contemporaine and co-founder of the youth outreach INGO Generation 11.

In 2016, Virginie launched in Melbourne the successful conference series "Addressing the New Landscape of Terrorism" which brings together academics, policy makers and practitioners from Europe, the United States of America, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Australia in order to exchange knowledge, provide critical advice on international approaches, practices and policies to preventing and minimising the risk of radicalisation and on countering violence extremism. The series also aims to bridge the gap between grassroots and front line practitioners, policy-makers and academics, while amplifying young peoples voices and promoting their active participation as agents of change. The series is now in its third iteration and will take place in Morocco.

Virginie has coordinated Monash University's Counter Terrorism Masters Program, lectured in post-graduate university courses and briefed high level government and intelligence officials on issues relating to terrorism, countering violent extremism, media and CVE, social media and religion. She has also undertaken research projects for the European Union, the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Attorney's

General Department of Australia and the Office of the National Broadcasting and Telecommunication Commission of Thailand. She has organised youth outreach programs and events with the Darebin City Council Youth Centre and the Youth Program of the Islamic Council of Victoria (Australia).

**HANIF AZIZI**

Community Police Officer (Sweden)

Hanif Azizi, 36, is a community police officer primarily working in especially vulnerable areas around Stockholm, Sweden. When Hanif Azizi was 19, he was about to leave Sweden to join a terrorist group. But a damaged passport cancelled the trip. Now he works as a community police officer in Rinkeby, and in his spare time he lectures for young people about extremism.

**VIOLET BAERT**

CUTA (Belgium)

Violet Baert works for CUTA, the Belgian coordination unit for threat analysis, and more specifically for their rather new CVE-department. The CVE- department strives to be a centre of excellence and coordination for all CVE- actors and -services in Belgium. Violet has been working on the topic of pro- blematic Radicalisation for about three years now, first at the Ministry of Interiors, and now at CUTA. She specialises in strategic communications and deradicalisation and disengagement. Before that, Vio- let worked as an expert in general crime prevention for the governor of the Antwerp province. She has a master's degree in criminology and a master's degree in Journalism.

**DR. JAMES BARRY**

Associate Research Fellow, Deakin University (Australia)

Dr James Barry is an Associate Research Fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute, Deakin University, Australia. James is currently working with the Chair of Islamic Studies and Intercultural Dialogue on several projects, including the effect of media framing on migrant communities. Recently, he completed a study on migrant hazing, the idea that migrants must «earn their stripes» through media scrutiny.

**ABDELKRIM BRANINE**

Journalist, Beur FM (France)

Abdelkrim Branine is a French journalist specialised in issues related to sensitive urban zones, post-colonial immigration and Islam in France. He was born in 1976 in Vierzon and grew up in an Algerian family settled for more than half a century in a popular neighbourhood of this

working-class city strongly affected by unemployment. Regularly requested for his analysis by the national and international media, especially since the wave of terrorist attacks in 2015, he directed for several years the newsroom of Beur FM, the largest Maghreb community radio in France. Several NGOs and foreign institutions (New York University, BKB Amsterdam, Kafaa to Come Algeria) also approached him to better understand the political and social situation of the country. He is currently finalizing the writing of his first novel, which will deal with the identity quest feelings of young French Muslim.

**DOMINIC CASCIANI**

Home Affairs Correspondent

Dominic Casciani is Home Affairs Correspondent who has reported on terrorism for BBC News for the past decade. In 2016 he broadcast the award-winning An Extremist in the Family, the first ever in-depth interview with a British Muslim family about how their son was groomed and radicalised to  fight and die in Syria.

**PROF. RIK COOLSAET**

Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Ghent University / Senior Research Fellow, Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations (Belgium)

Rik Coolsaet is professor emeritus at Ghent University (Belgium) and Senior Associate Fellow at EGMONT–The Royal Institute for International Relations (Brussels). He has held several high-ranking official positions, such as deputy chief of the Cabinet of the Belgian Minister of Defence (1988–1992) and deputy chief of the Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs (1992–1995).

From 2002 to 2009, he served as Director of the 'Security & Global Governance' Program at Egmont–Royal Institute for International Relations (Brussels). He was invited to join the original European Commission Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation (established 2006) and the subsequent European Network of Experts on Radicalisation (ENER). His areas of expertise are: international relations, diplomacy and foreign policy, and terrorism and radicalisation. On this last topic, his most recent publications are: 'All Radicalisation is Local'. The Genesis and Drawbacks of an Elusive Concept (June 2016); and Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters wave. What drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian case (March 2016). Both were released by the Egmont Institute (Brussels).

**ABDI CISMAN**

Youth Worker, Kölvi, (Finland)

I work in Kölvin Monikulttuurinen Nuorisotyö ry – shortly Kölvi, a small NGO from Tampere in Finland. Kölvi work is specialised in culture and gender sensitive youth work. Our target group is 12 to 25 years old migrant boys, most of whom have a refugee background. Our methods entail holistic youth work practices during weekly schedule. In Kölvi youth centre, I work especially with volunteers, peer support and participation activities. We work in close co-operation with the City of Tampere, local schools, the refugee centre and municipal social work organisations. In Kölvi, we also participate in different networks. I myself work with the local network on radicalisation awareness. My professional aim in this co-operation group is to make room for youth´s experiences of the society to be heard and seen.

**DAVID D'HONDT**

Religion Teacher, Change for Equality (Belgium)

David D'Hondt is a religion teacher in a professional and technical secondary school in Brussels (Molenbeek), Belgium. He obtained qualifications in the science of religion, Islamic religion, teaching religion and the question of mental health in lower socioeconomic families from the «Université Catholique de Louvain» in Belgium (UCL). During these studies, he focused his research on youth and Islam in Brussels. For the past ten years, he has worked as a religion teacher with students aged between 16 and 22. The majority of his students are of Moroccan descent, with their families coming to Belgium during the period of Moroccan immigration in the 1960s and 70s, and are of the Islamic faith. His work with these students is based on providing them with the tools to discover, understand and analyse the diversity of religions, with a particular emphasis on Islam. He is a member of «Traces de Changement», a teacher based publication in Brussels, in which he has published a number of articles about teaching religion, notably Islam, to students and coordinated a dossier «Laïcité et Religion à L'école» in January 2013. He is also a member of «La Revue Nouvelle», a Brussels based socio-political monthly publication. He has participated in debates about radicalisation and Islamophobia at the Facultés «Universitaires Saint-Louis» (Brussels), and has spoken about teaching youth religion in the context of radicalisation at a national level.

**ROKHAYA DIALLO**

Journalist, Writer and Filmmaker (France)

Rokhaya Diallo, French journalist, writer and filmmaker, is widely recognised for her work in favour of racial, gender and religious equality. She is a BET-France host and has produced and/or directed documentaries, TV and radio programs. She published: Racism: a guide, France Belongs to Us, France: One and Multicultural and How to talk to Kids about Racism. She recently published a graphic novel "Pari(s) d'Amies" and released Afro! featuring Afro-Parisians who choose natural hairstyles. Rokhaya launched her global bilingual blog RokMyWorld. Today, she lives between Paris and New York and continues her social activism while being a speaker around the world.

**WILLIAM (BILL) ELISCHER**

(Director Counter-terrorism Middle East, Africa and South Asia Section Counter-terrorism Branch - Department of Foreign A airs and Trade, Australia)

Bill Elischer was born and educated in Perth, Australia. After initially working in advertising, he joined the British Army passing selection for 29 Commando Regiment, Royal Artillery. Following training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst he commanded troops on four operational counter-terrorism tours in Northern Ireland. In 2003 Bill studied Arabic and was posted to British Embassies in Saudi Arabia, then Yemen to coordinate Counter-Terrorism programmes until he transferred to the Austra- lian Army in 2007.

Bill joined DFAT in February 2010, as Director High Threat Section, responsible for security of Aus- tralia's diplomats in Islamabad, Baghdad and Kabul. In April 2012 Bill assumed a global diplomatic security remit as Director of Operational Security Section. In June 2013 Bill became Director, Defence and National Security Section, responsible for Defence liaison and contribution to its strategic planning, US Alliance issues, National Security, and strategic political-military cooperation issues. In October 2014 he became the first Director of Counter-terrorism Middle East, Africa and South Asia, responsible for bilateral and multilateral Counter-terrorism (CT) policy engagement and programs for those regions, Central Asia and Europe. This includes Foreign Terrorist Fighter policy issues and programs and advice on terrorist listings and sanctions.

### NABIL FALLAH

Youth Worker (Belgium)

I'm Nabil Fallah and I'm 22 years old. I live in Brussels. I study accounting and tax and sit in my last year. I'm an involved person in my community. I do a lot of volunteer work in several youth organisations in Molenbeek. For instance, I give basketball lessons or organise activities for the youth of Molenbeek. I also organise a talent contest for the Brussels youth. I want to give the opportunity to these youngsters to develop their talent and also show to everyone that Brussels' got talent.

### JOUNAID HAYANI

Student and Member of Molenbeek Youth Community Centre Liberateurs (Belgium)

My name is Jounaid Hayani, I'm 21 and I'm from Brussels. Being from generation Y, I grew up with technology from the time I was born. Since I'm always connected and like to stay on top of the latest technological developments, after my general studies, it was quite natural for me to start a degree in Multimedia Writing (Web) at ISFSC (Higher Institute of Social and Communications Training), which enabled me to acquire skills in Web Design, Web Development and Digital Marketing. I am currently enrolled in a Master's in "Digital Analysis and Strategy" at Saint-Louis University in order to acquire skills in the 3 main fields of the Web. At the moment, once or twice a week, I work as a Digital Designer, Webmaster and Conversation Manager for Emakina and PMO. In addition to this, for the second year running I have been elected President of the Student Council at ISFSC where my mandate is to represent, inform and defend the rights of students while improving their daily life by organising activities for them.

### IVAN HUMBLE

Former EDL (UK)

Ivan was born in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk in 1970 but spend all of his life living in Lowestoft, Suffolk. He was a leading active member of the far right from 2009 when he joined the EDL (English Defence League) starting out as a foot soldier but quickly worked his way up to role of regional organiser for the East Anglia Region. Whilst regional organiser, he was responsible for setting up new divisions of the EDL throughout East Anglia also for arranging demonstrations and sorting travel from various places around East Anglia, recruiting, fundraising, administering many EDL pages on social media, and helping with the website.

Since leaving the far right in 2014, Ivan has been active in various communities within East Anglia. He also uses his knowledge and understanding to highlight and combat radicalisation and all forms of extremism, and campaigns against racism and hate crime. Ivan now talks about his personal journey after seeing through his hate and works to break down barriers and tackles the many misconceptions of his misguided hate hoping to help others to change their views to live a normal hate free life.

**ALYAS KARMANI**

Co-Director of STREET UK (UK)

Alyas Karmani is Co-Director of STREET UK (Strategy to reach, educate and empower teenagers) a specialist violence prevention intervention provider working with young people from mainly Muslim backgrounds who are at risk of criminality, gang involvement, sexual violence, social exclusion and violent extremism; recognised as an exemplar of best practice in the UK and working in both South London and West Yorkshire. STREET won the award for best Prevent project in London in 2010 and was regarded as the flagship preventing VE project from 2006-2011. To date he is worked with over 35 individuals who have been convicted of terrorism and related offences. Alyas has a Psychology background with over 25 years of counselling and therapy work focussing on Muslim centred mental health and emotional well-being. In 2008-2009 Alyas undertook a EU-funded project 'Reducing the Risks of Radicalisation for Prisoners' on behalf of London Probation- the project was based on interviews with TACT offenders and focussed on their pathways into offending; through this he trained offender managers in supervision of TACT offenders and undertaking risk assessments. In March 2010 Alyas visited Saudi Arabia and took part in an intensive programme of training and learning run by The Ministry of Interior- Ideological Education Department focussing on de-radicalisation of Saudi Al-Qaeda inspired individuals and observed their de-radicalisation programme. He is currently completing his PhD at London Met University.

**ANNA-LENA LODENIUS**

Freelancer and Investigative Journalist (Sweden)

My name is Anna-Lena Lodenius. I am a well-respected freelancer and investigating journalist with more than 30 years of experience. My articles are published in all sorts of media, dailies as well as periodicals, and I also have experience from working with TV and radio.

I have written more than 10 books, most of them are about Racism, Xenophobia, Radical Right Populism or Neo-Nazism. I am often used as an expert in media making comments on e.g. political violence, populist parties and anti-migration movements. I have also been working with information projects about different aspects of globalisation and human rights e.g. hiv/aids, terrorism, migration, decent work etc. My last book was about terrorism and told the story of eight different terrorists different countries from 1881 to 2016.

**JEAN-PAUL MARTHOZ**

Journalist and author of UNESCO Terrorism and Media: Handbook For Journalist (Belgium)

Jean-Paul Marthoz is a journalist, a foreign affairs columnist at the Brussels daily «Le Soir», a frequent guest to Belgian public broadcaster RTBF and Paris-based TV5. He teaches international journalism at the «Université Catholique de Louvain» (UCL, Belgium) and lectures regularly at a number of other institutions (CERAH-Geneva, EIUC Venice, etc.) He is a member of the Europe Advisory Committee of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, New York) and was the author of its October 2015 report on the EU and press freedom (Balancing Act: https://cpj.org/reports/2015/09/press-freedom-at-risk-europe-about.php). A vice-chair of the Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch's Europe and Central Asia division, he sits on the editorial board of Index of Censorship magazine (London) and on the Advisory Board of the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN, London). Jean-Paul Marthoz has been foreign editor and editorial page director of «Le Soir» (1980-1991), director of the Media for democracy Program at the International Federation of Journalists (1992-95), European press director of Human Rights Watch (1996-2006), editorial director of the foreign affairs quarterly «Enjeux internationaux» (2003-2008), and EU correspondent of the Committee to Protect Journalists (2010-2017). He is the author or coauthor of some 20 books on journalism, human rights and international relations. His latest book «Objectif Bastogne» (December 2015) tells the story of US war correspondents during the 1944 Battle of the Bulge. He is also the author of a number of manuals on international reporting: «Journalisme International» (2008), «Couvrir les Migrations» (2012), and Terrorism and the Media (UNESCO, 2017).

He has written reports, carried out missions and taken part in training programmes for a number of international organizations (The Committee to Protect Journalists, the European Federation of Journalists, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Naumann Found-

ation, the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, the Hirondelle Foundation, etc.). He was born and lives in Belgium.

**TONY McALEER**

Co-Founder Life After Hate (Canada)

A former organiser for the White Aryan Resistance (WAR), Tony McAleer served as a skinhead recruiter, proprietor of Canadian Liberty Net (a computer operated voice messaging center), and manager of the racist rock band, Odin's Law. Tony was eventually found to have contravened Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act that prohibits the dissemination of messages likely to expose groups to hatred by telephone. Tony built one of the first white supremacist websites for Resistance Records. Tony's love for his children led him on a spiritual journey of personal transformation. Financial hardship and the harsh realities of single parenthood brought him to a place of compassion and forgiveness. Today he is Board Chair and co-founder of Life After Hate whose core services stems from the foundation of its members' reformed ideology and unique experiential immersion within the world's most violent extremist organisations.

**HUGO MACPHERSON**

ESCN (Belgium/UK)

Since 2015, Hugo has worked for The European Strategic Communications Network (ESCN), a collaborative network of 26 EU Member States sharing analysis, good practices and ideas on the use of strategic communications to address the terrorist and violent extremist influencing effort. Hugo's background comprises TV production (Al Jazeera, BBC, Channel 4) media relations for the charitable sector (Amnesty International, Save the Children) and government consultancy.

**CATHRINE MOESTUE**

Clinical Psychologist (Norway)

Cathrine Moestue, is a clinical psychologist with a private practice in Oslo. The last four years she has been engaged in the topic of radicalisation and extremism, teaching the police, writing articles and educating the public about manipulation and basic social psychology. She has spent much of her career doing both clinical and organisational work. In 2007 she trained directly with Dr. Robert Cialdini, teaching his class on ethical influence for leaders and taught social psychology at the University College Kristiania. In addition Cathrine has been writing regular columns about self-help and decision-making since 2011.

Cathrine Moestue, grew up in Oslo, Norway in an upper-middle-class family with four siblings. While attending «Folkuniversity» in Stockholm (1984–85), she encountered teachers who claimed to have a program to "save starving children" and lured her to participate. The group, which drew on communist teachings, isolated her from her family and made her feel guilty for her privileged upbringing. After years of working hard to "save the world," she became disillusioned and, after several attempts, in 1992 she successfully escaped this destructive group by running away. She worked in the advertising industry and managed a radio company before earning her degree in psychology at the University of Oslo and becoming a psychologist and eventually seeking therapy to deal with her traumatic experience. She is currently working on her memoirs. Relevant article: Published interview with Robert Cialdini on unethical influence tactics: http://www.icsahome.com/articles/you-do-not-have-to-be-a-fool-to-be-fooled-doc

**OOMAR MULBOCUS**

Therapist and Interventionist, W L Initiative CVE Specialist, Train the trainer Prison & Probation Consultant (UK)

Oomar was born and raised in 'Plaine Verte, known as Al- Ghadafi Square', on the Island of Mauritius; next to South Africa. He spent most of his early years as a young person growing up around violence, gang-conflict and hate. His life was filled with so much rejection, family neglect and surroundings of radical movements. At the age of 14, he embarked on a long journey of a new, buzzing ideology, working towards a justice state after having searched for normality as a young person. For the next fourteen years, he worked very hard with the group Hizb-Ul and Al Muhajirooun to radicalise, preach and recruit towards a Neo- Khawaareej Ideology in Mauritius, UK and other parts of the world. After many years of exiting the group and regret, he went through therapy, studied Islamic Theology, Arabic Language, Psychology & Counselling and Conflict Resolution. Now he draws on his life experiences in his current involvement, works to tackle this Criminal Ideology, extremism and any sort of violence to bring change from a grass-root prospective. He's currently working as a Therapist in the Criminal Justice System, facilitator for high risk Prisoners and Ex-offenders in the community. In addition, he is an Intervention Provider registered by the Home Office, a train the trainer (with DERAD in Europe), a facilitator at George Marshal Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen Germany and a member of Radicalisation Awareness Network (an EU-wide umbrella of practitioners involved in countering violent radicalisation).

**YASMIN MULBOCUS**

Criminologist and Freelance Caseworker against Child Sexual Exploitation/Domestic Violence and Violent Extremism (UK)

Yasmin Mulbocus a BSc (Hons) Criminology/Sociology currently works as a Freelance Caseworker in the remit of tackling Child Sexual Exploitation/Domestic Violence and Violent Extremism. Due to her previous background both as a survivor of Child Abuse and a former Al Muhajiroun female recruit between 1996 – 2000, she works in conjunction with Third Sector Organisations such as Inter-Diversity Ltd as well as the Local Authorities as a freelance caseworker /interventionist/associate education engagement mentor.

**ROBERT ÖRELL**

Director, Exit Sweden, NGO Fryshuset/ Co-chair EU RAN Exit (Sweden)

Robert Örell works as a director at Exit Sweden headed by the NGO Fryshuset. He has over fourteen years of experience on work with disengagement from political extremism and criminal gangs. He has professional experiences from social work with supporting victims of crime, parental support, networking and management. He is an internationally requested speaker and expert. Robert is involved in national and international networks focused on sharing knowledge and best practices in the field of radicalisation, disengagement, and intervention. He has arranged several international conferences and workshops. He is an adviser on the work of setting up Exit organisations in several countries, as well as participated in- and worked with several EU projects. Since 2012 Robert is a member of the steering committee of the European Commission's RAN (Radicalisation Awareness Network) where he co-chairs the working group RAN Exit. Since 2016 Robert is also part of the expert pool at the RAN Center of Excellence.

Robert works together with the Swedish National Coordinators office to set up a national RAN network for practitioners. During 2014 he supervised the work at the family support hotline project Sy.Realize concerning Foreign Fighters. Robert has studied social pedagogy, has completed a basic psychotherapy training and has taken a certificate in Terrorism Studies at the University of St. Andrews. In April 2016 Robert made a TEDx talk at the event in Vilnius on the topic: A way out from violent extremism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNIgKsb1QbA.

**ABDELKADER RAILANE**

Director of Mission Locale, Commission For the Promotion of the Equality of Opportunity and Citizenship (COPEC) (France)

Abdelkader Railane is a Director of a "Mission Locale" and Representative of the COPEC for the Haute-Loire Department. He is also a former boxer of the Red Stars in Saint Ouen, a Municipality in the North of Paris, and a Knight in the "Ordre des Palmes Academiques" (Order of Academic Palms). His first novel, «En Pleine Face» (Full Face), was published in 2011, followed by his second novel «Coeur Halal» (Halal Heart) in 2007 and «Chez nous ça s'fait pas» in 2016.

**ABID RAJA**

Police Officer, Communities Engagement Team, New Scotland Yard (UK)

Abid joined London's Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) in 1994, with a background in business after graduating from University in 1989. He served for ten years as a borough based police officer, working for much of that time as the local community officer in Notting Hill, west London. He initiated the first Islamic Cultural awareness training in this area, which now forms part of the routine training for all local officers. His unique life experience in London formed the basis for his joining the MCU (Muslim Contact Unit). Abid has delivered talks to delegations from around the world, which have included analysts, academics, police and security personnel, as well as senior political figures such as ambassadors and government ministers. Within officialdom he has lectured to a wide range of groups, from operational officers within the CT world in county Police forces to regular courses run by the agencies and the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT). He has addressed various academic venues, including the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University, on the causes of extremism within Communities. The MCU is recognised as a centre of excellence nationally and internationally, for its ground-breaking and unique approach within the Prevent initiative and on de-radicalisation matters within the CT arena. The task of the Unit was to establish contact and trust within the Muslim Communities of London, thereby enabling access for police and other partners too hard to reach sections of the community. This permitted officers to become better equipped as a result of a grass roots perspective. This, in turn, enhanced everyday CT strategies, enabling communities, law enforcement officers and intelligence operatives to work within more efficient and competent frameworks.

**AHMED REHAB**

Executive Director, CAIR-Chicago (USA)

Ahmed Rehab is the Executive Director of CAIR-Chicago. Rehab is a regular contributor to the Chicago Tribune and Chicago Public Radio. He has been interviewed hundreds of times by newspapers, radio, and TV venues, both national and international. Rehab lectures at various University campuses in Chicago and around the nation. Rehab is the founder of MyJihad Inc., a global PR and outreach campaign that seeks to take back Islam from Muslim and Anti-Muslims extremists alike. He is also the founder of the ChicagoMonitor.com, The Muslim Youth Leadership Symposium, a high school program designed to "build constructive citizenship for a better America", and the Co-founder of Bridge Initiative at Georgetown University. Prior to joining CAIR in August of 2004, Rehab was a freelance speaker, writer, and activist in the fields of interfaith collaboration, education, and community outreach. Between 1999 and 2002, Rehab served as a consultant for Arthur Andersen LLP – a global consulting firm. Rehab served on the board of the Illinois Coalition of Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR). He also served on IL. Governor Pat Quinn's Muslim Advisory Council, and as vice-chairman of RegugeeONE, Illinois' premiere refugee resettlement organisation. He is a former board member and secretary of the Egyptian American Society, a member of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs' (CCGA) Muslim task force, an Eisenhower fellow of the American Assembly, and alumnus of the FBI Citizen's Academy.

**JONATHAN RUSSELL**

Senior Strategist at Breakthrough Media

Jonathan Russell is Senior Strategist at Breakthrough Media, a communications firm dedicated to positive social change. We work with a range of public and private sector clients to counter violent extremism, promote democracy, counter misinformation, and protect the environment. Jonathan has over half a decade of experience advising governments on CT, building CVE programmes, and delivering counterspeech campaigns. He is co-chair of the Communications and Narratives Working Group at the EU's Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN).

**DR. DEBRA SMITH**

Research Fellow, Victoria University (Australia)

Dr Debra Smith is an industry research fellow working with the Centre for Cultural Diversity and Wellbeing at Victoria University and Defence Science Technology Group. Her research focuses on the role of emotion within groups, ideologies and behaviour as it pertains to violent extremism. She has worked on projects with various law-enforcement and government partners to understand processes of radicalisation that lead to violent political extremism. Debra delivers training for practitioners in the use of National Countering Violent Extremism Intervention Tools, and is currently working with the Defence Science Technology Group to understand more about how social influence takes place within the realm of social media and its relationship to violent extremism. Debra is also co-leading a project on the narratives and connections between various extreme-right groups in Victoria.

**JESSIKA SOORS**

Head of the Service For Deradicalisation, City of Vilvoorde (Belgium)

Jessika Soors works for the city of Vilvoorde, Belgium; the city with the highest relative number of foreign fighters who left for Syria in Western Europe. As head of the service for deradicalisation she coordinates the city's policy on this issue in direct cooperation with Mayor and MP Hans Bonte. Moreover, Jessika is very active at the international level. She co-chairs the working group for local authorities of the European Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). She is also part of initiatives such as training programs on the reintegration of returning foreign terrorist fighters (training program supported by the US Department of State). She was recently involved in the trainings for Kosovo and Tunisia. Finally, holding a Master's degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies, Jessika conducts research within the research group History of the fundamentals of Islam (Catholic University Leuven).

**ANDRE TAUBERT**

Founder and Manager Legato (Germany)

André Taubert, founder and manager of Legato has been advising, following up and supporting families, professionals and individuals since many years in northern Germany. He has been one of the first social workers in Germany to start with a systemic advising approach in terms of countering violent extremism. By his daily work he is creating a holistic understanding of processes of radicalisation beyond his clients and their individual story of radicalisation. Since 2012 André Tauber had often been asked for support according children growing up in

radicalised environments, mainly called by teachers, social workers or divorcees. The main outcome of his approach is to create an alternative social surrounding to the parental one, where vulnerable children can experience levity, commitment and childhood.

**RUDI VRANCKX**

VRT War Reporter (Belgium)

Rudi Vranckx was born in Leuven, Belgium, on December 15, 1959. He studied Modern History at the KULeuven (Catholic University of Leuven). After his graduation he started working at the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences as a researcher at the Centre of Peace Research. There he made scenario's and films about conflict control and warfare. After three years of working for the university he passed for the journalists exam of VRT. (Belgian public TV- and Radio-broadcaster) In September 1988 he started working for the radio news desk, but very soon he made the switch to the television news floor. He started making war reports in 1989, with the fall of the Romanian dictator Ceausescu. After that he covered the Gulf War and the conflict in Sarajevo. Since 2001 he has covered many conflicts, mostly in the Middle East. He also covered the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. In 2014, he travelled through Africa from East to West. This journey resulted in a documentary series on current conflicts in Somalia, Ethiopia, South-Sudan, Thad, Niger and Mali.

Rudi Vranckx is also covering the war in Syria and Iraq for VRT News. He's currently focusing on radicalisation, Islamic State and the recent terror attacks in Europe. Rudi Vranckx has written seven books: "Van het front geen nieuws", his personal accounts of the wars in the Middle East, "De geesten van het avondland", about the roots of Muslim terrorism and "De ontdekking van Congo" (The discovery of Congo), his personal experiences on his long trips to Congo during the past year. His book "the curse of Osama" covered ten years of warfare after 9/11. His latent book «war for the minds» was the bestselling non-fiction book of the year. It deals with the war on terror and the rising of ISIS.

During the past years Rudi Vranckx has interviewed many leaders such as Jasser Arafat (PLO), Mahmoud Al Zahar (Hamas), Mohammad Khatami (Iran), Tayyip Erdogan (Turkey), Jalal Talabani, Massoud Barzani, (Iraq), Lyad Allawi (Iraq), Prince Faisal of Saoudi-Arabia, Prince Talal of Jordan, Hamid Karzai (Afghanistan), Musharraf (Pakistan).

Documentary film series: The Curse of Osama, The Route of the Arab Revolution, ISIS in the Crossheir and the awarded documentary My Jihad about the Muslim voice on terror and radicalisation in Belgian society.

**BURHAN WAZIR**

Editor, The Guardian (UK)

Burhan Wazir is an award-winning editor and writer, based in London. He is an editor at Wiki- Tri- bune who recently returned to the UK after working in Qatar, where he was head of opinion at Al Jazeera. He has previously worked at The Times and The Observer. He covered the war in Iraq in 2003 and has reported from Israel, Palestine, India, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Burundi. He regularly contributes to The New Statesman, the Financial Times, the Guardian, Prospect and The World Today.

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