



29th COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS OF PRISON AND PROBATION SERVICES

MANAGING RETURNEES AND THEIR FAMILIES

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V-Europe: who are we? (I)



- => Creation 2016 (Brussels terrorist attacks)
- => By and For VoT (Victims of Terrorism)
- => Belgian Parliamentary Enquiry Commission on 22/3 attacks
- => Belgian Federal Taskforce on supporting VoT
- => EC DG Home : Philippe Vansteenkiste, RAN Co Leader WG VoT
- => EC DG Just : Victims Rights ; representing VoT
- => EC DG Just : EUCVT (Support creation => Exec Comm =>Partner)

V-Europe :who are we? (II)



=> Belgian Federal Ministry of Justice: Coordinators Program

- Unique worldwide (Mobile Single Point of Contact)
- support > 350 official recognised VoT + family members (+/- 1000 Service Users)
- International Training + continuous supervision
- Biweekly “1-2-1” mental health Supervision Coordinators
- Biweekly Group Therapy Coordinators
- 54 nationalities or bi-nationals

V-Europe :who are we? (III)



=> VoT from following attacks represented by V-Europe

Jewish Museum Belgium (Belgium - 24/05/014)	Nice (France - 14/07/2016)
Bamako street (Mali - 06/03/2015)	Schaerbeek (Belgium - 05/10/2016)
Tunis (Tunisia - 18/03/2015)	Istanbul (Turkey - 01/01/2017)
Sousse (Tunisia - 26/06/2015)	Stockholm (Sweden - 07/04/2017)
Paris (France - 13/11/2015)	Barcelona (17/08/2017)
Bamako Hotel (Mali - 20/11/2015)	New York (USA - 31/10/2017)
Rue du Dries (Belgium - 15/03/2016)	Liege (Belgium - 29/05/2018)
Brussels (Belgium - 22/03/2016)	Schaerbeek (Belgium - 10/11/2022)
	Brussels (16/10/2023)

V-Europe :who are we? (IV)



=> Goal:

On the field support of all recognised VoT, without any discrimination, to allow them to rebuild themselves as good as possible and to reintegrate society as a proud citizen

=> Pillars to reach goal:

DIGNITY - MEMORY - TRUTH - JUSTICE



TRUTH (I)

V-EUROPE

=> The need to understand what we are a victim from

=> ISIS (Da'esh): Who are they? Why did they killed my family and/or tried to kill me?

=> From 2018 until 2022:

V-Europe goes “on the field” to understand the source of perpetrators:

- Iraq (KRG / Mossul)
- North East Syria (Rojava)



TRUTH (II)



=> Rojava

- FTF (prisons)
- ISIS (Da'esh) women & children
 - Al Roj / Al Hol
- Victims of ISIS (Da'esh)

=> Iraq

- Victims of ISIS (Da'esh)
 - Muslims, Yezidi, Christians from the Orient
 - Kurdistan, Mosul, Sinjar





TRUTH (III)

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=> Belgium

- Sharia 4 Belgium (prison)



JUSTICE (I)



=> Justice is not Revenge.... but a need of recognition for the VoT

=> V-Europe's participation at Prosecution

- Shooting Driesstraat, Belgium (Police Forces => Abdeslam / Ayari)
- Jewish Museum Belgium (1st ISIS attack on EU soil) (Partnering AfVT & CAT)
- Bamako Hotel attack, Mali (direct support VoT)
- Sousse, Tunis (direct support VoT)
- Barcelona, Spain (direct support VoT)

JUSTICE (II)



- Paris 13/11 attacks, France (Partnering AfVT, 13onze15)
 - Brussels 22/3 attacks, Belgium
 - www.22-3.be => became the reference website for VoT, authorities, press, society
 - agenda
 - debriefings
- => Yezidi Genocide recognition (Belgium Gov't)
- V-Europe missions (MP's participation)
 - Participation Foreign Terrorist Activities VS Crimes against Humanity











Some stories....



We are unique in the panoply of our operational contacts:

- Victims of Terrorism
- Terrorists / ISIS soldiers (FTF)
- ISIS women and children
- Family members of FTF (Belgium and France)
- Convicted radicalised persons (France prisons)
- Persons on the path of radicalisation (France prisons)

ISIS Soldiers (FTF) (I)



Reflections on experiences:

- “Innocence” claims
- “No regrets”
- Not realising / not willing to realise the ISIS atrocities
VS
accusing ISIS by “disconnecting” themselves from it?
 - psychological surviving mode?
 - Taqiyya : the right to lie and/or commit a sinful action to defend the religious cause

ISIS Soldiers (FTF) (II)



Justice & Prosecution

- AANES
 - Requires prosecution following International and Human Rights laws
 - No “death sentence” (for FTF)
- Re geopolitical situations: no current way out

ISIS Soldiers (FTF) (III)



The Future ?

- Local prosecution (what about imprisonment after eventual trial?)
VS
home country prosecution (what about international cooperation?)
- Escape risks? (cfr 2022 Hassaka attack)
- Long term imprisonment under current conditions - not very likely
(Baghouz 2019...=> 5 years and counting...)

ISIS Women & children (I)



Meetings with women and children in the Kurdish detention camps in NE Syria

- Foreign nationals
- Al Roj VS Al Hol
- Meeting constraints:
 - Time slots
 - Finding the women in the camps (Al Hol)

ISIS Women & children (II)

V-EUROPE

Reflections on experiences:

- Change of attitude over the years (2018 -> 2022)
- “Innocence”
- ISIS support VS willingness to exfiltrate
 - Children (language, games, etc.)
 - Risk of life (revenge, burning tents, etc.)
- Estimation of “illegal detention”
 - “Hypocrisy” of home country => increase/support of extremism

ISIS Women & children (III)



Justice & Prosecution

- No prosecution in Rojava
- Returnees
 - Variable per country of residence (e.g. Belgium, France, Germany, The Netherlands)

The Future ?

- Non returnees:
 - Costs camps / ISIS build up in region and camps
 - Women are seen by ISIS as key for their future (bearing children)

Some Risks.... ? (I)



- There is no good solution: we must find the least bad solution
- Time is against us
 - Dragging on with a “temporary situation” without a real solution
 - => increase of feeling of “injustice”
 - => supporting their extremism (Caliphate vision) and build up of hate
 - ISIS build up (region, prisons, camps)
 - 5 to 12 years living in extremism with a most barbaric history
 - > psychological impact / disconnected from any other way of live and society
- Geopolitical impasse

Some Risks.... ? (II)



- Risk of “revenge”
 - ISIS soldiers
 - Women
 - Women are not always as innocent as we would like to believe..
 - Children
 - what did they do to my father and mother..?
 - living conditions of the first years of life.... (psychological impact)
 - ISIS (direct/indirect) preparation of some children to fight for the Caliphate....

Some Risks.... ? (III)



Reality seldom aligns with our desires

*"We must uphold justice and adhere strictly to our democratic beliefs and values,
but we must not naively ignore potential hidden dangers."*

Victims of Terrorism (I)



Our societal obligations:

- supporting VoT in rebuilding themselves
 - e.g; V-Europe's Coordinators program
- connecting VoT to society (and vice versa)
 - e..g Together Stronger activities
 - www.togetherstronger.eu
- build a positive meaning to the atrocities VoT went through
 - P/CVE is a complex matter, touch-basing various fields. Voices of VoT can provide a tremendous support in P/CVE activities
 - e.g. Schools and prison

Victims of Terrorism (II)



Key:

=> providing the needed support to the victims of terrorism, so that they can rebuild themselves as good as possible

=> reintegrating the victims into our society

=> connecting the VoT to the projects Returnees' integration

Cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders, including the victims, increases chances of success for all parties.

By doing this, we realise a main step in countering terrorism:

Terrorism will not fragment our society, but at the contrary it will strengthen us.