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# VIRTUAL COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

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6-10 JULY 2020

## Webinar III: Addressing the Plight of Victims of Terrorism in a Challenging Environment

8 July 2020, 9:00- 11:00 EST

### Concept Note

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy ([A/RES/60/288](#)) remains the fundamental framework to guide Member States' efforts to assist victims of terrorism and promote and protect their rights. Since the sixth biennial review of the Strategy in June 2018 ([A/RES/72/284](#)), work on victims of terrorism issues has substantially increased at the international, regional and national levels, including two recent milestone General Assembly resolutions dedicated to victims of terrorism: the establishment of an International Day of Remembrance of and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism on 21 August ([A/RES/72/165](#)); and enhancing international cooperation to assist victims of terrorism ([A/RES/73/305](#)). The establishment of the Group of Friends of Victims of Terrorism reflects the importance of victims of terrorism on the agenda of Member States and provides strong support in advocating for their rights and needs.

The Victims of Terrorism Support Programme, in the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre within the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, recognizes the rights and needs of victims, stands in solidarity with them, and works to raise public awareness about the impact of terrorism by strengthening victims' voices and their role in preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism, and building the capacity of Member States and civil society organizations to assist and support victims of terrorism.

Despite the recent developments towards a more robust strategy in support of victims of terrorism, much remains to be done. The COVID-19 crisis has brought about a new layer of complexity. The suffering and the uncertainty generated by the pandemic have changed the way people live their lives and connect with each other, bringing back feelings associated with an attack and triggering trauma reactions in victims of terrorism.

Guaranteeing the rights and needs of victims of terrorism is increasingly jeopardized in these circumstances, as Member States divert their efforts and resources to the COVID-19



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response, which could affect victims' access to justice, and the legal, financial and psychosocial support provided to them. For example, face-to-face psychosocial support has been limited by physical restrictions, reducing the resources available for victims; many memorials and commemorations have been cancelled or moved on-line, depriving many victims the opportunity of communal support. Victims of cross-border attacks are further excluded from access to the support they need during the pandemic because of travel restrictions.

In addition to support and services provided by Member States, civil society organizations also play a strong role in supporting the recovery of victims. However, there are serious concerns that the funding on which such organizations rely may be diverted to the COVID-19 response, or in some cases simply no longer be available. This could lead to significant delays in victims receiving much needed support, and the inability of organizations to return to even pre-pandemic levels of service.

In order to ensure that victims continue to be well supported even during and beyond the pandemic, there needs to be strong international cooperation and a combination of efforts from Member States and civil society, such as victims' associations, human rights organizations and academia. Without concerted efforts and collaboration, the progress that has been made in recent years to protect, promote, and enshrine the rights of victims of terrorism is at risk of being eroded, even as the threat of creating new victims persists.

The aim of this session is for Member States, civil society organizations and victims of terrorism to discuss progress towards protecting the rights and meeting the needs of victims of terrorism laid down in A/RES/73/305, and how to maintain this momentum in light of the COVID-19 response during and post-pandemic.

## Key Issues to be addressed:

- *How can we preserve momentum and focus on strengthening action on the human rights of victims during a global pandemic?*
- *What are the challenges and critical needs about providing assistance to victims of terrorism in a pandemic and post-pandemic environment?*



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- *How can we further enhance international cooperation on supporting victims of terrorism?*
- *How can we promote the voices of victims and survivors of terrorism and their important role in countering terrorist narratives?*