Reporting on violent extremism and terrorism and/or on other critical incidents

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Module contents:

- Introduction to Radicalization, Violent Extremism and Terrorism.
- Instigators of Violent Extremism and its Manifestations.
- Distinguishing violent extremism and terrorism from (legitimate) resistance.
- Treatment of foreign fighters (case study).
- Fake news, propaganda and glorification. How to detect and avoid them?
- Facing fear.
- Maintaining balance between freedom, security, and responsibility.
- Framing and media reporting of various forms of terrorism.
- Preparing news: interviews and special reportages.
**Key concepts**

**Extremism**
When a person or group believes in views which are thought to be unreasonable and unacceptable to most other people.

**Violent extremism**
When a person or group thinks that fear, terror and violence are justifiable means to achieve ideological, political or social changes and then acts on these beliefs.

**Terrorism**
Refers to a specific strategy used to achieve a political objective by deliberately creating and exploiting fear.

**Radicalization**
Process by which a person adopts extreme views or practices to the point of legitimizing the use of violence.
What incites violent extremism?
How does this phenomenon manifest itself?

- Formation of radical beliefs through contact with radical religious individuals outside the structures of the Muslim Community, but not only.
- Difficult socio-economic conditions.
- Lack of necessary education and training.
- Strengthening of radical beliefs through propaganda and communication on social networks.
- Personal or kinship acquaintances among radicalized youth.
- Isolation and lack of community engagement.
How can violent extremism & terrorism be distinguished from (justified) resistance?

**Important: not to speculate with...**

- Human rights and basic freedoms in the fight against terrorism;
- Freedom of expression and media freedom;
- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion or religious belief;
- Respect for private and family life;
- The right to peaceful assembly and right to association;
- Policing approaches in the community;
- Equality and non-discrimination
Case study

The case of Germany

Which approach adapts best to our country?

The importance of rehabilitation and reintegration programs in combating and preventing violent extremism.
Politicians denigrate, scare, and threaten media

Why should we not use the term “fake news”?

The term “propaganda” is not a synonym for disinformation.

Disinformation can serve at the interest of propaganda.

Use of technology - Deep Fake video

“The role of a media is different from the role of a politician or a political party;

Our responsibility is to report facts, contextualized events, and work with our readers to understand what is happening. Failure to report the name of the terrorist would undermine these efforts.

However, we think it is important to ensure that the terrorist’s identity is not over-represented in our coverage and that our coverage also focuses on the victims.”

Katharine Viner, The Guardian
How to face fear?

- Terrorist organizations and extremists use numerous methods to attack journalists
- Intentional targeting and attacks on journalists and online publishers, including their sources
- The primary goal is to undermine public trust in journalism
- Often the goal may involve the safety of journalists and their sources
- Journalists are targeted through ‘astroturfing’ and ‘trolling’
- Journalists face threats on social media
- Certain accounts are created to expose journalistic sources, violate privacy, and expose them to the risk of intimidation
Maintaining balance between freedom, security and responsibility

- Provide context and do not overdo it. Such events do not occur in a vacuum.
- Do not speculate about anything! Deal only with facts and data that are known or can be verified.
- What we report should not endanger human life.
- Do not use panic and sensational headlines.
- Do not use derogatory, inappropriate or humiliating words.
- Make sure your news has data (figures) from multiple sources.
- Promote social cohesion, peace and patriotism without being anyone’s mouthpiece.
- Tell stories about community sustainability, proper intervention, and other positive angles.
Media reporting of various forms of terrorism

Terrorism is multifaceted - it is described as an instrument that mixes elements of physical and psychological violence with ideological and mediatic propaganda.

- A terrorist act usually is:
  - with “noise” (classic method)
  - “noise-less”, sophisticated through the use of technology or scientific innovations (i.e., cybernetic attacks).

- In both cases the author/authors aim at making the act as public as possible, propaganda amplification (by the media).
Media reporting of various forms of terrorism

Features

• There is more discussion about the consequences/victims of terrorist acts.
• Identification is delayed (whether we are dealing with a terrorist act or for events due to other reasons).
• Sources of information are very limited.
• A cacophony of figures dominates over the consequences.
• Scenarios on the event are constructed (more hypothetical, conjectural)

Challenges

• Terrorist acts are topics that require longer-term coverage of their dynamics; Professional journalistic staff and groups operate in some states.
• Information is provided only about the visible part. Journalistic investigation is like an impossible mission.
• These are coverages that require human resources on the ground.
Preparing news: interviews and special reportages

- Requires high professional level;
- Source diversification;
- Insist on info from specialized authorities and institutions;
- Relying on experts, good knowledge of the field.

- Is the interview worth it?
- Do we have access to the interviewee?
- Is safety ensured for the journalist (team)?
Case study

Recruitment of fighters from Albania on behalf of the Islamic State, IS

- News (information with sources from security and intelligence institutions)
- Chronicle (from the trial)
- Interviews with those charged
- Reportages (mostly in their families)
- Discussions, studio panels
- Vox Pops
Summary

✓ The process of radicalization leads to violent extremism and terrorism.

✓ There is an Albanian legal context related to violent extremism and terrorism.

✓ Media plays a role in presenting and reporting on violent extremism and terrorism.

✓ It is important to prepare professional interviews, special reportages and news.

✓ Ability to distinguish between fake news, propaganda and glorification, as well as to avoid them.

✓ Proper use of images, photographs and words when covering issues of violent extremism and terrorism.